

PlayStation B PS2 PSP 演劇端末
Issue 193
Castlevania: Lords of Shadow
Fallout: New Vegas
LittleBigPlanet 2
Call of Duty: Black Ops
Medal of Honor
Gran Turismo Sport
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hands-on

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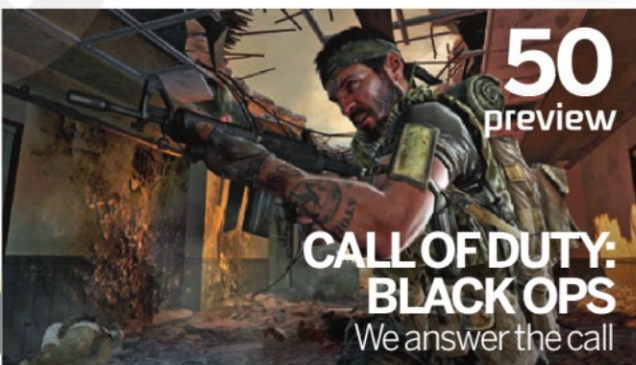
LITTLEBIGPLANET 2

Media Molecule builds the best game yet

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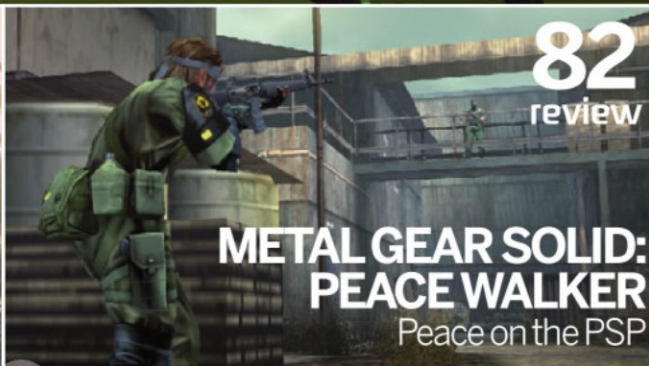
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PlayStation 3 PS2 PSP 演劇端末

Welcome PLAY

The UK's best independent PlayStation magazine

E is for entertainment



E 3 is upon us and that can mean only one thing... games. So many games in fact that this month **Play** was almost full to breaking point trying to fit them all in, but don't worry we've managed it. Our coverage kicks off with a world exclusive of MercurySteam and Kojima Productions' revamp of the classic *Castlevania*. Kojima and co have been very

Most mind-boggling experience we've been privy to in some time

secretive about this one but now they're ready to talk exclusively to us about how this next-generation iteration will create its very own legend for future gamers to coo over. Having seen the game in action we're certainly not going to argue as it's shaping up to be *the* action-adventure game of 2010.

Staying with Kojima, we've been welcomed back into the world of *Metal Gear Solid* with its latest release, *Peace Walker*. Promising a full and proper instalment this time around it has the potential to be one of the best games

ever released on the PSP. Does it deliver on its promise? Turn to our reviews section to find out.

A runaway hit last year, the *Fallout* franchise returns to try to steal the crown once again with a game set in Las Vegas – well, what's left of it anyway. Foregoing the blackjack tables and fabulous stage shows we spent our time in the virtual Las Vegas shooting mutants in the face and the best thing about it was that we never once woke up with a hangover or down a thousand bucks. While I won't spoil it for *Fallout* fans, with us having had the very first hands-on with the game I can assure you that you should be getting very excited about this one.

Plenty of gaming goodness then and that's without even a mention of new information and images for *Call Of Duty: Black Ops*, *Medal Of Honor*, *PES 2011* and the most mind-boggling experience we've been privy to in some time – *LittleBigPlanet 2*. Like I said, it's one hell of a month for PS3 games and it's all waiting for you inside. I'm almost jealous.

K. HENNESSEY Editor

contributors



Darran Jones

This month Darran was cooking some eggs in a pan over a stove. He thought he could smell burning so he had a good look at the eggs, turned them over and reassured himself that his eggs were not burning. Then suddenly he noticed that the tea towel he was holding in his other hand was ablaze. He got well told off when his wife came home.



Simon Miller

Miller told us he'd done nothing this month, so we asked him about his dreams. We really wish we hadn't, though. He was on a train and he was crying, then he realised he was in *Fallout: New Vegas*, then he was being sniped at, then he realised the sniper had killed his dad, then he threw a dog at the sniper. What a weirdo.



Gavin Mackenzie

Gav's mum loves owls and has a vast collection of model owls and pictures of owls and other owl-shaped things. But she's not allowed to horde any more owls, so instead Gav took her to meet and handle some real owls. She said they were all beautiful but she liked the little ones best as the larger ones were a bit heavy.

the PLAY promise

Play solemnly swears (raises right hand) to bring you the best PlayStation magazine that is humanly possible.

We will always bring you the most in-depth, impartial, honest reviews and will never bow down to PR or advertising pressure. We have some of the most experienced reviewers in

the industry and we're not afraid to use them. And we take our own screenshots so you can see what the game looks like *when you play it*. We will be the first to break the biggest stories, the first to cover the biggest games and in the most detailed way. We will only ever bang on about the very best PlayStation games, the ones that we would pay our own cash for. We aren't afraid of expressing an opinion, especially when it's for your benefit.

So don't expect our previews to simply regurgitate a load of internet or press release tosh – we'll be telling you whether a game is looking good or not, regardless of the stage of the code.

We want to fuel your passion for gaming like no other magazine and we want you to trust everything you read here. If you don't then you can simply stop buying it. That's how confident we are that you'll love **Play**. Promise.

PLAY

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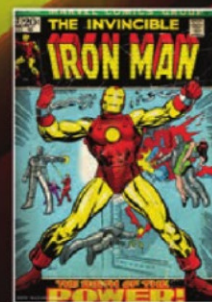
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Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

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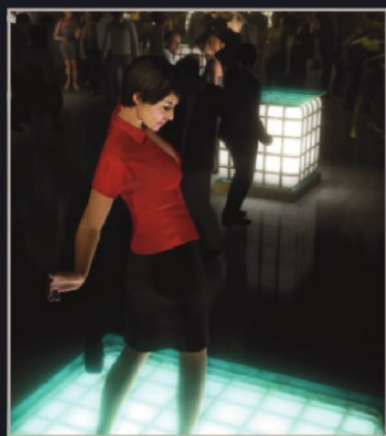
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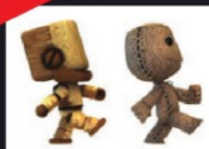
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"I felt like if I can do this I can do anything as an actress" – Judi Beecher, actress and voice of Madison Paige in *Heavy Rain*, p12

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HANDS-ON WITH LBP 2



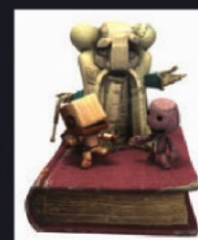
Sackbot

Sackbots are Sackboy clones controlled by AI or, as in this case, by a Direct Control Seat.



The Cosmos

The best theme we saw is *The Cosmos*, which blends hand craft with classic arcade gaming style.



Dave Inchi

The opening theme in *Story mode* is *Da Vinci's Hideout*, home of this character, Dave Inchi.



Customisable Planet

Instead of customising your Pod you get to decorate your very own planet in *LBP 2*.



Fluff

As if it wasn't already cute enough, *LittleBigPlanet 2* will be including fluffy, furry materials.

Heart This Author

There's no other developer like Media Molecule, says Gavin Mackenzie



I MEET A lot of game developers, as you'd expect, and while they're all individuals with different personalities and different games to talk about, I find I get much the same fundamental vibe from all of them. They want me to believe that their game has something special about it and that it will be worth playing and that it will be a commercial success, whether or not they really believe that themselves or not.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting several members of the Media Molecule team and I can honestly say I didn't get even a slight trace of that kind of thing from any of them. Their enthusiasm for *LittleBigPlanet*

2 is exceeded only by their admiration and appreciation of the community they're absolutely dying to unleash it upon.

They genuinely do not seem to care one iota about sales or marketing or competition. To them *LittleBigPlanet* is all about giving people a unique opportunity to express themselves and impress each other using powerful tools that you don't need a professional qualification to use.

Other developers' talk of sophisticated storytelling and player choice just sounds hollow after you've heard MM's exaltations on personal, meaningful expression and on how they don't just want

people to enjoy their game, they want them to "shine" because of it.

"I think expressive comes after impressive," Kareem Ettouney told me. "People have to shine technically, it's a good way in, but expression then comes because you have more vehicles to use it. And so I'm hoping that

To Media Molecule *LittleBigPlanet* is all about giving people a unique opportunity to express themselves

we'll start seeing the meaning, the expression, the stories of life, people's outlook."

And that's no sales patter, that's 100 per cent from the heart.





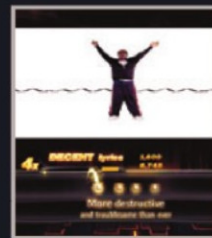
COD Sequel Websites Registered

According to online reports Activision has registered a series of domain names for potential *Call Of Duty* sequels. These domains include the titles 'Future Warfare' and 'Space Warfare'. Could these be a clue as to the direction the franchise will be going in soon?



PS3 Finally Making Profit

According to Reuters the PS3 is finally making a profit, with Sony having cut back on how much it costs to make the console. Up until March 2010 Sony had been losing money on every PS3 sold. Thanks to some cost-cutting measures and cheaper parts, Sony is finally seeing the cash flow in the right direction.



Def Jam Rapstar Gets UK-Exclusive Tracks

Def Jam Rapstar developer 4mm has announced two exclusive tracks for the UK when its interactive hip-hop game is launched this year. The songs are Tinie Tempah's *Pass Out* and Dizzee Rascal's *Fix Up, Look Sharp*. Could this game revitalise the music game market?

UNKNOWN HORIZONS

LittleBigPlanet's future is uncertain but that's the point says Media Molecule

Having revealed a sequel to *LittleBigPlanet* that it had said would never happen, Media Molecule spoke exclusively to **Play** and told us it has no idea how *LBP 2* is going to develop, but that's just how it wants it. Creative director Mark Healey and art director Kareem Ettouney expressed their shock and deep pride in what was achieved with their first game and the great sense of anticipation they feel about their second.

"We had no idea what the outcome would be [for *LBP*], whether it would be a traditional game with some tools and then five people use them and that's it, or what," Ettouney says. "We did the story levels to inspire people and then they did 2 million levels. It's humbling really."

What happened next was that slowly – so slowly that some had written it off as a flop by Christmas 2008 – but surely *LBP* grew to become one of the biggest successes of this gaming generation, with the PS3 version achieving 3.3 million (and counting) sales and spawning 2.3 million (and counting) levels. In short, it worked.

"It's a great message that this game worked," Ettouney agrees. "You know how you see in newspapers and on TV, it's bad news. All the time. And then you

find out that this generation is talented and technical. The beautiful part of *LittleBigPlanet* is how talented people are out there, and how many as well."

Indeed, *LBP* is a game like no other. While with most games the relationship between creator and user is separate and one-way, in *LittleBigPlanet* creator and user are one and the same, and Media Molecule operates not alongside its community, but at the very heart of it.

"We try to walk the walk with the community," Ettouney says. "But we have

The beautiful part of LittleBigPlanet is how talented people are out there, and how many as well

a harder experience because we get to use the tools when they're broken and being developed and still fiddly."

"The funny thing is that the PC tools we were using [when work began on *LBP*] were crap," Healey adds. "And it got to the point where the Create mode was better. We've only been using that to create stuff [in *LBP 2*], which is the obvious thing to do because it forces us to make the improvements that mean you can do things better and faster."

Using the game's own tools to make its story mode also allows Media Molecule

the opportunity to hint at possibilities and inspire Players to become Creators. "We try to have many seeds, little plants, little flowers and let the community do the trees," is Ettouney's way of putting it.

And Media Molecule is excited by the idea that it's simply impossible to foresee what form these 'trees' are going to take once the community gets to grips with *LittleBigPlanet 2*.

"You're going to have people making every genre of game you can imagine," says Healey. "You're going to have people making movies, interactive movies, kinds of movies that probably don't exist yet. I dunno, I just can't wait, man... I just can't wait to see what the community does with this stuff."

"It's like the potential of a pencil," says Ettouney. "It's the simplest creative tool and we're still surprised by its power. What you write or what you draw is just infinite. So imagine a tool that has all these things that range from world creation to AI creation to movie creation... what is possible?"

You tell us, where are the limits this time? What really would surprise you?

"I'd be amazed if there is one person out there with all the skills that the game offers. 'Cause that means musician, technologist, engineer, artist, designer... Leonardo. Actually, maybe it is the case."

Speculation a-go-go!

Five ways the PSP 2 can make its mark



TECHNOLOGY We expect a touch screen, analogue sticks and camera(s), but there are elements like simpler PS3 integration that should also be considered.



PRICE The PSP and PSPgo were too expensive on launch. Sony has the chance to break with this tradition and release the PSP 2 at a competitive price.



EASIER ONLINE SETTINGS

Trying to get our PSPs online if we've taken it out of our house is too hard. Whatever connection method is used, it must be simple.



BETTER MARKETING Sony needs to take a leaf out of Nintendo's marketing book and make the PSP 2 look like something for the whole family.



FORGET ABOUT APPLE Sony needs to forget about Apple. Those who want a machine for gaming alone will always opt for Nintendo or Sony over Apple.



The Dark Brotherhood

Assassin's Creed multiplayer details revealed

PERHAPS A BIT earlier than Ubisoft intended, *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* has been officially confirmed for later this year. Word came through after a US retailer leaked a pre-order image for the game, which was later confirmed as genuine by Ubisoft. As originally promised, the game will feature online multiplayer, but what else do we know about it?



1 Ezio returns for *Brotherhood*, now in Rome and leading his own guild of assassins as he hunts down the Templars. If the teaser art is correct then this is post-beard Ezio, meaning the events of *Brotherhood* take place at least after Sequence 11 of *Assassin's Creed II*.

2 *Brotherhood* features online multiplayer in which you'll be able to create your own assassin and customise their 'killing style'. Again the artwork suggests you can play as a male or female and that a choice of costume will be made available to you, not just the classic hood.

3 *Brotherhood* may not be a sequel. The lack of a 'III' at the end of the title and the subtitle 'Brotherhood' hint at this game being a spin-off title. Even so the events of *Brotherhood* could have a massive impact on the events of a proper *Assassin's Creed III*.

The Mod Crowd

United Front is looking forward to leaning on its community

Speaking to *Play* recently *ModNation Racers* director Will Ho told us that leaving his game in the hands of the community holds no fear for him and that he was already impressed by how people have

content," Ho insisted to us. "While we're extremely proud of the content we're shipping on the disc – 28 tracks, several dozen characters and karts which are all excellent – we are actually encouraging

We are encouraging the community to do as well or better than what our professional artists have done

taken to it. Great user-created tracks and mods are already flooding onto PSN, but the beta test from earlier in the year proved that it wouldn't take much to get people engaged with *ModNation's* fantastic creation tools.

"We actually hope it will become extremely reliant on user-generated

the community to do as well or better than what our professional artists have done. We want people to master the tools and we want people to make great content for everyone else to enjoy."

Signs that this would be the case were already there when *ModNation* enjoyed a rather creative three-week beta test near the start of the year. Ho was not only impressed by the quality of what was produced, but

also by how it was achieved with virtually no pointers from the development team.

"We didn't help people out," Ho told us. "We didn't include the tutorials that were in the final game, in the beta test. What we were amazed by was that people were publishing, I think, on average 1.5 creations per person. This was despite the fact that it was a limited window with no tutorial and no help, but still people were mastering the tools on their own. And that's just the published creations; we don't know how many creations were actually created that weren't published."

If that trend follows on to the full game, which we have no doubt it will, the *ModNation Racers* community promises to be just as vibrant as that for *LittleBigPlanet*, if not more so.

PLAY TEAM TROPHIES

Things the Play team has achieved this month



PLATINUM: IAN

Was able to beat IO at its own game during a multiplayer preview of *Kane & Lynch 2*. His victims started thinking the code was broken.



GOLD: KEITH

Took the Play DVD home to check instead of leaving it until Monday morning, thus setting a good example to the troops.



SILVER: GAVIN

Managed to beat Tottenham with Dundalk FC in *FIFA*, which was quite a feat even if it did upset Jon rather a lot. He was furious.



BRONZE: JON

Sacrificed his hearing in the line of duty while covering a press event for *Play*. It finally returned a couple of days later.





STAT ATTACK
5.8
average hours per
week spent
playing PS3 by
US gamers

STRANGER THAN FICTION

Future Soldier team turned down 'unbelievable' technology

Speaking exclusively to **Play**, *Ghost Recon: Future Soldier* producer Adrian Lacey revealed that while the development team based the majority of the tech in their new game on real-life prototypes, some of what they saw just wouldn't have been believed by gamers and got cut from the game.

"We're fortunate that Red Storm (Tom Clancy's development studio) and our military consultants give us access to some crazy prototypes and equipment,

especially when it comes to weapons and aiming systems," Lacey said. "This time we wanted to push things further. We were inspired by different research agencies, for example DARPA, the US research agency that funds applied research for the military. They basically define what the US Army will look and feel like in the future."

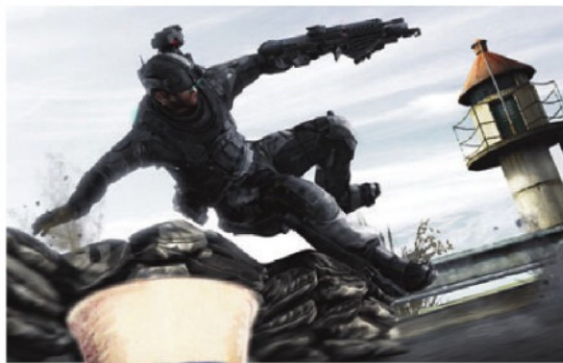
It was in speaking with these agencies and checking out their technology that some odd discoveries were made, some of which were scaled back to work in the game and others dropped altogether. "We [found] ourselves toning real items down because people just don't believe us when we tell them it exists," Lacey revealed, but couldn't

say too much more for fear of revealing military secrets. "We held back on very little, but a few things were just too insane and even we couldn't believe it when we saw it. I'm not allowed to give details for

A few things were just too insane and even we couldn't believe it when we saw it

security reasons, but it was more genetic and biological-related developments."

But for all this tech Lacey promised us *Ghost Recon* wouldn't just turn into a shooting gallery. "Weapons and gear is one thing, but special ops warriors are still human underneath and if they get shot they bleed," he assured us. "They are highly trained soldiers but the idea is not to give them superpowers. Enemies will have equivalent weapons to create balance and ensure you still have to use your skill and keep your wits about you."



Play Needs You!

Fill in our online reader survey

PLAY NEEDS YOUR HELP. We're far too awesome, but we don't know exactly how we became so awesome. We think it may have something to do with the cheese we eat in our sandwiches. But we're probably wrong.

Do you know who can't be wrong about what makes **Play** great? You!

Amazing **Play** readers like you know this magazine better than anybody and so we want to know more about you. Head over to the **Play** Blog and fill in our anonymous reader survey so we can make **Play** better than ever.

Head on over to www.play-mag.co.uk/announcement.



QUESTION?

Is Mass Effect coming to the PS3?

IT'S BEEN ONE of the biggest questions on gamers' lips for two and a half years now, ever since EA bought BioWare, but no straight answer has ever been offered, so we're just going to keep asking 'til someone says 'yes.' Here's the clues, evidence and plain common sense behind the debate so far...

PS3 references found in PC code of Mass Effect 2

At first this seemed like the most concrete bit of proof yet, but it turned out to be something common to any game developed using Unreal Engine 3, and is actually the flimsiest reason to believe *Mass Effect* is PS3 bound. It's not a reason to believe it isn't, though.



It's just good business sense

This is the most compelling reason. It doesn't make sense for EA to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on a company then *not* do everything possible to maximise the sales of that company's flagship franchise. We can't imagine a mutually beneficial deal hasn't been struck between EA and Microsoft.



BioWare never really denies it

BioWare always chooses its words very carefully when 'denying' *Mass Effect* is coming to PS3 (almost always, see below). In fact, it never actually denies it at all. It's always something like "Mass Effect is for the PC and Xbox 360". If it were never coming to PS3, then BioWare would just come out and say so.



BioWare once admitted it

Speaking at the Poznan Game Arena show in Poland last year, BioWare community manager Jay Watamaniuk openly stated that *Mass Effect 2* was targeting the Xbox 360, PC and "probably" the PS3. He then later rather unconvincingly claimed that it had been a misunderstanding.



We've been here before

Remember all those 'denials' about the DLC packs for both *Fallout 3* and *GTA IV* coming to PS3? Remember how all that DLC *did* come to the PS3 eventually? Obviously, we're not just talking DLC with *Mass Effect* but the pattern is a very familiar one.



ANSWER: Our money's on a double pack before the end of 2010

The New Queens Of PlayStation

The digital women that rule the roost on PS3

ONCE UPON A time Lara Croft was the leading lady on PlayStation, but now a new breed of heroine is dominating the current generation of the console.

> BAYONETTA

Games often get accused of making women objectified pieces of meat and while Bayonetta could have been a good example of this, her sexy look and attitude make her one of the strongest women on the PS3.



> MADISON PAIGE

She may get into trouble a lot, but she always (provided you didn't screw up) came out the other side unharmed. Her drive and determination would make her a natural sequel candidate.



> LIGHTNING

With many billing her as the new Cloud, Lightning had a lot to live up to. Thankfully her bold and unswerving character gives FFXIII some drive and her willingness to sacrifice herself for her sister is compelling.



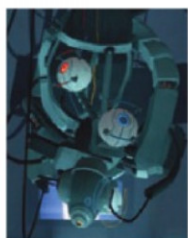
> CHLOE FRAZER

Elena may be the stalwart of *Uncharted*, but Chloe stole the show with her no-nonsense approach. Some have compared Drake to Han Solo, but Chloe is much closer to the Star Wars bandit.



> GLADOS

It may be an AI but GLaDOS has a wonderful mix of mother-figure and jilted ex-girlfriend to its personality. Simply one of the best characters of this generation, and one of the main reasons we want *Portal 2* on PS3.



The Other Madison Paige

Voice actress Judi Beecher reveals her role in making Heavy Rain

Given all the attention given to model Jacqui Ainsley you'd be forgiven for thinking that *Heavy Rain*'s Madison Paige was brought to life by just one actress. In fact it took two women to create the troubled heroine of Sony's groundbreaking exclusive. Actress Judi Beecher provided the voice and facial capture for the character while Ainsley gave Madison her movement and looks. However, even being half of the character was quite a job says Beecher.

"I've done TV leads, feature film, theatre," Beecher told us. "This was one of the most challenging jobs I've had yet, but very enjoyable. I felt like if I can do this I can do anything as an actress." The length of time needed to shoot was due to the evolving nature of dialogue in the game and the need to learn scripts from heart. "You're not able to look down at your script while you're reading as the sensors will pick that up," Beecher said. "So each scene needs to be memorised. It took me about a month to memorise all the lines, my character had 150 pages of scripted dialogue. It was quite



Judi Beecher, the 'other' woman behind Madison Paige.

This was one of the most challenging jobs I've had yet, but very enjoyable

difficult to memorise it because each scene had five different endings."

But why split the character between two actresses? Beecher says it was a question of efficiency as Jacqui Ainsley had already provided much of the body animation for

the game and been used as the inspiration for Madison's design. "I came on the project a year after they had begun and I worked on

the role from casting to finish over a year later," she said. "The character of Madison had already been established and the first demo – the Taxidermist – had already been made, when they recast Madison. They were considering having me do the body motion capture as well as the facial and voice, but they were concerned that it wouldn't match

what Jacqui had done. She is taller than me and had already begun the body capture. They would have had to have redone the whole thing."

So there you have it. Madison Paige, a character so deep she could only be achieved by adding two women together to make her. Now, Ainsley seems to be getting attention in the tabloids, but what is Beecher doing? "I'm filming the female lead in *Death By Prescription* (Mort Par Ordinance) directed by Lewis-Martin Soucy," she told us. For some it seems the work never ends.

All Or Nothing

MercurySteam leaving everything on the field says Castlevania producer

After the disappointment of Clive Barker's *Jericho*, developer MercurySteam is giving all it's got according to *Lords Of Shadow* producer Dave Cox. Speaking exclusively to *Play*, Cox admitted that MercurySteam had its reputation on the line with its latest game, but that he has faith in its ability to make one of the best games in the franchise's history.

"I think this is a chance to prove themselves and to put their name on the map, so they've really gone above and beyond the call of duty," he revealed. "If you get an opportunity to work with a developer like Kojima Productions on a franchise like *Castlevania* then you grab it with both hands."

MercurySteam's last game, *Clive Barker's Jericho*, was received well by *Play*, but got slated elsewhere. Rather than burying its head in the sand, though, it has come out fighting with *Lords Of Shadow*. Cox believes that the real quality of the team will be shown with *Castlevania*. "I think when games go wrong it's not always the developer's fault," he told us. "There are other elements that you might not be aware of, and I think that was the case with *Jericho*. The proof will be in the pudding when the game comes out, but I'm happy working with them and I want to continue working with them."

World Exclusive Preview

Read more about Lords Of Shadow from page 40



REASONS WHY...

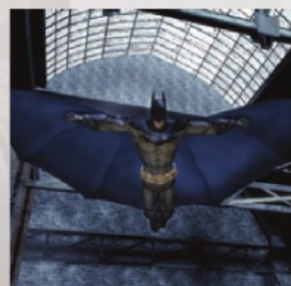
Batman: Arkham Asylum II could be game of the year



WE BELIEVE IN HARVEY DENT Where was Two-Face in *Arkham Asylum*? It was a question asked by many Batman fans. Harvey Dent is one of the best villains in the Dark Knight's back catalogue and would make an excellent adversary in this game.



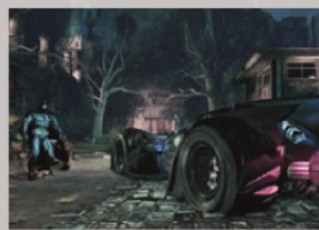
A HOUSE DIVIDED The teaser pointed at bases for Mr Freeze, Two-Face, The Penguin and the Joker. Could that mean the district has been split between the bosses? That would be a cool way to break up the game.



HELP FROM FRIENDS The bat-cast looks likely to increase as the battle to contain *Arkham* spills onto Gotham's streets. Robin is most likely and could be a good way to introduce some co-op gameplay.



IT'S GETTING DARKER Gotham is getting a taste of the dark stuff. After the events of *Arkham Asylum* it's hard to imagine things getting much more grim, but if the asylum spills onto the streets it could happen.



WHEELS OF STEEL By the end of the last game it would seem the lunatics are being contained in a district of Gotham. With that amount of space we expect the Batmobile will play a much larger role.

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

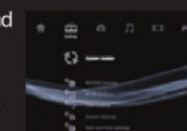
What's the PSN missing? These few things at least.

1 PlayStation 2 and Dreamcast games:



Another month of no news on this front, but another month where our enthusiasm doesn't diminish. Downloadable *Okami*, *Soul Calibur* via PSN – it still makes us happy just imagining this feature could one day exist. Sony, Sega – get on it.

2 Background patch downloads: Stop making us sit there while



a 563MB* patch is applied to *Noby Noby Boy* (*roughly). Just let us download it while we do other things on the PS3, like play other games, watch films or something else that takes up the two decades needed to download seemingly any patch.

3 PaRappa The Rapper/UmJammer Lammy:



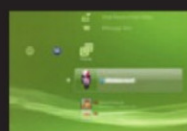
Moving up from fifth place last month simply because we played *PaRappa* the other day. It's still utterly magnificent. People who haven't played it need the experience.

4 Cross-game chat: Standing still in fourth place – it probably would have gone up the list, but we're getting more



comfortable with the idea that it is actually coming. And as we all know, once you know something is on its way it loses some of its magic.

5 Friend-of-a-friend viewing:



Dropping from second place last month, purely because we're a bit bored of the idea. Oh, and the rumours that E3 will have some PlayStation Network announcements, so this might be one of them.

WWWTs news:

As is the way with the world of online, *The Secret Of Monkey Island* immediately appeared on the US PlayStation Store as soon as we had gone to print with the last issue. So that's off the list.

YOUR SAY

Paying Extra For A Bargain

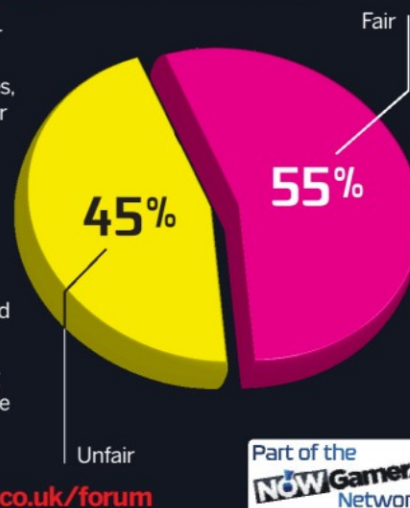
How do you feel about EA's Online Pass scheme?

AS PART OF its Project \$10 scheme to entice gamers away from pre-owned games or at least get some money off the back of them, EA has announced that its sports titles this year will include an Online Pass. This pass code will give players who pick up games, starting with *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11*, access to online functions including multiplayer competitions. If you buy the game second-hand you'll have to buy access to these features via PSN instead. It's a move that has really split the gaming community.

I think it's fair, and a good idea. EA host their own servers – why should they let you use them for free when you're not putting a penny into the company? – **Equinox10**

I don't really have a problem, because most people buy games online at a good price instead of from the high street. I think their second-hand games could get cheaper, and so could their brand-new games – **the bossman**

Publishers hate the used-game market, so I guess it was inevitable that this was going to happen. They get no profit when someone buys a used game. Plus EA has to provide their online services for the person who bought a pre-owned copy – **Omi-cloud**



Join the Play Nation by signing up to our forum at www.play-mag.co.uk/forum

Part of the
NOW Gamer
Network

● Splash Damage has gone for a more intimate eight-versus-eight system to help encourage teamwork.



Brink



Q&A

Splash Damage's creative director Richard Ham talks Play through how Brink is looking to shake up the multiplayer experience on PS3

Read More!
Get the full interview at play-mag.co.uk/interview



at other times, when things aren't quite as chaotic, you won't have all those other cool abilities that could come in handy. On the other hand, if you had branched out, you'd have more utility at all times, but you wouldn't be quite as useful when the lead starts flying.

The fluidity of the movement offered by your SMART system looks like a very welcome addition to this type of shooter. How challenging was it to make that work for you in the game?

The most important thing about the SMART system was ensuring that it was tactically interesting. To that end, we've put limits on how high you can climb based on what body type you choose (small, medium or large). And then on top of that, we've also introduced a lot of paths in levels that can only be accessed by the smaller body types. This creates a lot more interesting gameplay opportunities, where, as a small guy, you can sneak around and attack from directions that the enemy isn't normally watching for!

What would you say you've learnt from online gaming thus far this generation that you didn't know before when making the *Enemy Territory* titles?

Probably the most important lesson learnt is that bigger isn't always better. For *Brink*, we could have increased player counts even higher than we had with *Quake Wars*, but we decided early on that going for a more intimate experience produced better gameplay for our type of

Brink features a character advancement system where you earn experience points (XP) to level up, and when you do, you can choose from a wide variety of abilities to give your character.

So how do you earn lots of experience points? Well, not always by killing the enemy. Sure, you get a tiny bit of XP for taking out opponents on your own, but you get an order of magnitude more for, say, upgrading your team-mate's weapon, or blowing open a shortcut that your

team-mates can use to carry vital intel to safety. So, players are actively encouraged to do stuff that ends up helping everyone else.

How have you gone about balancing and complementing each of the playable classes in the game?

We had to look at it this way: how can we ensure that all players, no matter what class they are, are valuable, contributing members of a team? The solution there is interdependencies. During the course of a match, there will be times that you'll need your team-mates of a different class to help accomplish your mission. By that same token, there are some things that your squaddies won't be able to do without your help.

And as long as no one class stays on the top of the food chain for too long, I'd

say we've accomplished what we need to do for class balance.

Is it the kind of class system that benefits from specialisation or should most players be able to master all of the different classes?

There's no right answer to that. It depends on what players want from the game. As a Medic, say, you specialise in becoming better and better at keeping people alive, and you don't branch out into some of the other side disciplines that you could explore. That means you are by far the best man to have around when your group comes under fire, but

We decided that a more intimate experience produced better gameplay for our type of shooter

shooter. That's why we're an eight-versus-eight game – we really want players to get connected with their team, and with the enemy, instead of being lost in a sea of replaceable players.

Are you hoping that the structure of the game will encourage truly co-operative gameplay between players as opposed to the usual 'everyman for himself' attitude that is often seen in online games?

Getting players to work together is one of our primary goals, so there's a lot of ways we're trying to encourage this. If I had to pick the best example, I'd have to go with how we're using XP. Basically,



● Different paths and gameplay styles are available to players depending on their character's body type.

Familiar Faces

Could Lando and Ackbar be coming to Force Unleashed II?

In further conversation with *Force Unleashed II* executive producer Haden Blackman after our world-exclusive look at the game last month, he revealed his interest in some of *Star Wars*' more established characters and how two in particular almost appeared in the last game. Lando Calrissian and Admiral Ackbar are fan favourites with deep histories in the *Star Wars* universe, but neither made the cut last time out. This time perhaps things will be different.

The biggest concern for Blackman was that by adding these established characters the development team could be distracting from the story it was trying to tell. "Lando is one of my favourite characters, so we tried to find a way to put him in *The Force Unleashed* when you were going to Cloud City, but it just felt like it was blatant fan fiction at that point if we were doing that," he admitted to us.

Admiral Ackbar nearly arrived as DLC and could yet make an appearance. "In our early design we had a whole level where you were going to rescue Admiral Ackbar," said Blackman. "Every time we talked about DLC it came up



Will Vader be the only famous face in *TFU II*?

— there's some continuity stuff that we have to sort out, but I'd love Admiral Ackbar, just to hear him say 'It's a trap!'"

The final decision has to come about in a natural way, though, and besides *TFU* already has one major character from the *Star Wars* universe. "It just has to come out naturally and organically from the story," Blackman insisted. "The great thing is that we have Vader there — he's a main character, so sometimes it does make sense to fold in some of the other characters around him."

Maths Reveals GT5 Release Date

We crunch the numbers to reveal the truth

AS WE WRITE this we still don't have a release date for *Gran Turismo 5*. However, we do have a lot of statistics telling us how complete or incomplete the game has been over the last few months. With these figures we've been able to determine a great deal about the game's development.

Completion

If these figures are correct *GT5* has been inching towards completion at a rate of 3.75 per cent per month. At this rate the game will be finished by the late evening of 24 July.

May Release

What would it have taken to get *GT5* out for the original May release?

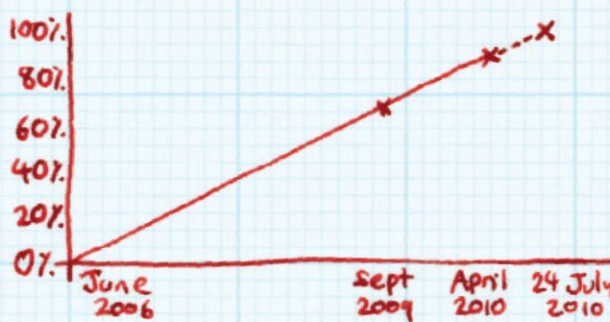
$$\frac{25\%}{140 \text{ staff}} = 0.17857 = 0.0255\%$$

7 months

140 staff working on the game complete 25 per cent of *Gran Turismo 5* in seven months. That's a rate of 0.0255 per cent of the game finished by each team member per month.

$$\frac{10\% \text{ left}}{0.0255} = 392$$

With only one month to complete the game from April 2010 for a May 2010 release Polyphony would need approximately 392 team members working on it.



The Money

June 2006 to April 2010 = 58 months

$$\frac{\$60 \text{ million}}{58} = \$1.034 \text{ million}$$

$$\$1.034 \text{ million} \times 2.8 \text{ months} = \$2.896 \text{ million}$$

Polyphony has said that *GT5* has cost \$60 million to produce, which means that it has spent \$1.034 million per month. If our estimate is correct then the final ten per cent will cost \$2.896m — that's if it doesn't incorporate the rumoured 3D element.

VERDICT: Release Date August 2010 (possibly)

Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

- Red Dead Redemption**
Rockstar
Straight in with a bullet comes Rockstar's Western epic. Has a new star been born? **92%**
- 2010 FIFA World Cup**
EA
Football dominates and since the World Cup is now kicking off, this was a sure thing. **70%**
- God Of War III**
Sony
Even Kratos can't stand up to the combined force of international football and Rockstar. **88%**
- God Of War Collection**
Sony
Tucking in nicely just behind its latest sequel comes the *God Of War Collection*. **93%**
- UFC Undisputed 2010**
THQ
Not the greatest diversion from the original, but fans will have been desperate for another go. **88%**
- ModNation Racers**
Sony
The Play, Create, Share brand continues to capture the imagination of gamers. **90%**
- Super Street Fighter IV**
Capcom
Interesting to see *SSFIV* hold firm. Perhaps it will fall next issue as other challengers arrive. **90%**
- Modern Warfare 2**
Activision
All eyes are now turning to *Black Ops*, so we don't expect *MW2* to be in the charts for much longer. **94%**
- Battlefield: Bad Company 2**
EA
Much like *MW2*, as eyes turn to the new *Medal Of Honor*, expect *Bad Company 2* to fall away. **93%**
- Split/Second: Velocity**
Disney
Given everything else out this month, this is a good start for Disney's action racer. **90%**

PSP CHART

- 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa**
EA
The PSP chart continues to be a place for populism so the World Cup game storms in to the top spot. **65%**
- LittleBigPlanet**
Sony
Sackboy takes a tumble, but excitement over *LBP 2* on PS3 could see his stock rise again soon. **90%**
- Gran Turismo**
Sony
We're still not sure when *GT5* is coming out, so if you have any clue please get in touch. **85%**
- FIFA 10**
EA
Can we have two football games produced by the same publisher in the charts? Clearly we can. **NA%**
- Invizimals**
Sony
Good to see this is still getting some love, but what about all the other great PSP games. **71%**

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.

INSTANT EXPERT

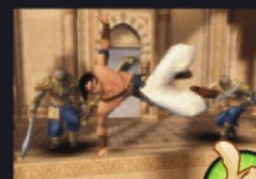
All of the pros with none of the prose



DOS & DON'TS

Important lessons from Play this month

DO: Have another go at playing *Prince Of Persia: Sands Of Time*. It may be better than new POP title *The Forgotten Sands*.



DON'T: Forget to swerve after destroying a yellow car in *Blur* as they drop mines and you could easily drive right into it.



DO: Make friends with PSP owners so you can play *MGS: Peace Walker* in co-op and really get the best from the experience.



DON'T: Annoy the gods. It's just a bad idea and without exception ends up with a lot of sad faces and a few upset stomachs.



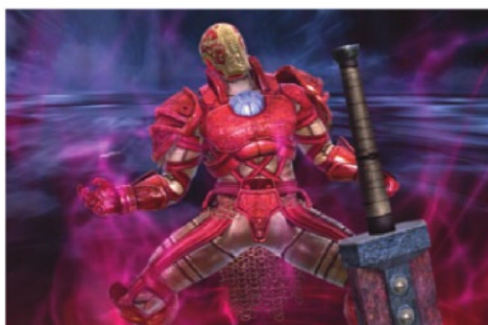
Read our reviews of all these games starting on page 78

PLAY CREATES, SHARES WITH... SOUL CALIBUR IV

This month's Play creations from the big games on PS3



GANDALF — Being the White incarnation of the great Middle Earth wizard means that he's a dab hand when it comes to combat. Given that the White Wizard's chosen sidearm is usually a staff he uses Kilik's moves.



IRON MAN — We call this the Chivalry Armour Iron Man, perfect for if Tony Stark is taken back in time to the era of King Arthur. You may laugh, but given some of Marvel's other plot lines for Stark we wouldn't bet against it frankly.



LION-O — The hero of the ThunderCats was a joy to create. We're pleased with the likeness but we couldn't find a sword that would extend on command or make him shout 'Hooo!'. Small matters aside this seems like a winning model.

Soul Calibur IV was reviewed in Issue 169, available from the Imagine eShop

Made something cool in a game?

Send an image to play@imagine-publishing.co.uk and share it with the world.

● *Peace Walker* is filled with in-game advertisements... but only in Japan.



THE LAST JAPANESE HERO

Hunting Monsters with Snake on a Golden Week holiday

OUR MAN IN JAPAN

PlayStation pondering from the East

It seems I'm always talking about *Metal Gear*. Maybe because it's one of the few Japanese franchises that can really excite Western audiences in the age where a numbered *Final Fantasy* game gets a shrug and a 'meh'. Maybe because the series' frontman, Hideo Kojima, has done an excellent job of promoting his

placement. I was at the event and watched as Kojima and other Konami reps announced product tie-in after tie-in without the slightest hint of shame – in fact, their attitude could best be described as downright giddy.

From Uniqlo T-shirts to Mountain Dew and Axe body spray, *Peace Walker* is filled with all kinds of real-world products... in Japan. That's right, UK gamers are going to have to settle for generic sodas and potato chips. All that product placement requires an unbelievable number of lawyers and a lot of time. While corporate

back-scratching and after-hours drinking sealed the deals in Japan, Konami didn't have the time or resources to replicate the effort in every other territory.

One of the few remaining tie-ins are the *Monster Hunter* missions. Players in every region will have the chance to shoot up the enemies from Capcom's

From Uniqlo T-shirts to Mountain Dew, *Peace Walker* is filled with all kinds of real-world products

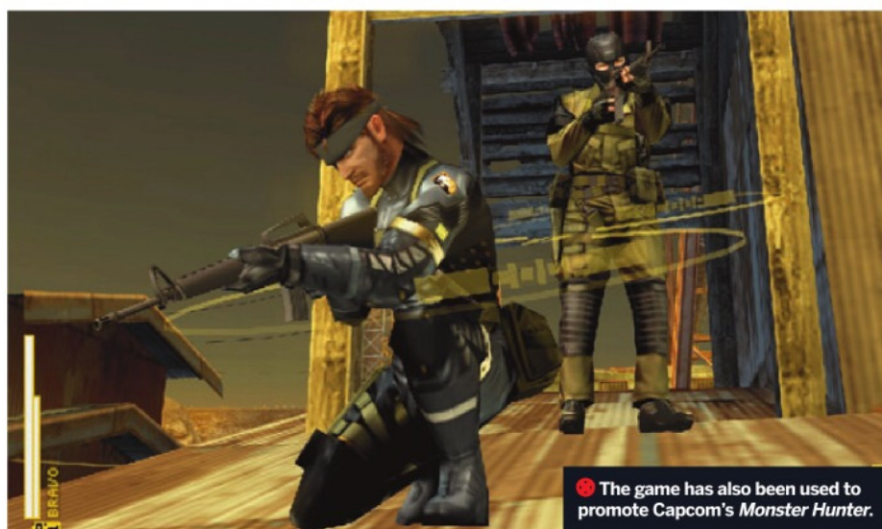
upcoming PSP title, *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker*. Either way, this month was one *Metal Gear* announcement after another.

First up was the 'completion ceremony' for *Peace Walker*, a massive press conference that detailed the game's unannounced features, including product

ODD BIN

More virtual women

Is your relationship with your virtual girlfriend unfulfilling? Why not marry her? The latest game from Idea Factory, *My Wife: A Wife Just For You*, lets you choose your perfect wife's voice, personality, name and birthday. To experience the thrill of meeting and marrying your virtual wife you'll need to move to Japan – the game will never see the light of day outside of the country.



● The game has also been used to promote Capcom's *Monster Hunter*.

Japanese mega-hit. This is actually a brilliant deal between Konami and Capcom. Only *Pokémon* dwarfs *Monster Hunter* in Japan. While *Metal Gear* is a hit series, the franchise is bigger in Europe and North America than in Japan. The addition of *Monster Hunter* enemies in *Peace Walker* will move units of the game in the East, while giving free advertising for *Monster Hunter* in the West.

Promoting *Monster Hunter* abroad is a big deal for Capcom. The series is a cash cow in Japan and any foreign revenue is gravy. Nothing could be more lucrative for the company than replicating the domestic success of *Monster Hunter* abroad. Capcom is hoping that *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker* will spur sales of the series, not only now but in the future, too. While previous entries in the *Monster Hunter* series have stayed locked away in Japan, expect every successive game in the series from this point on to be localised. Now I'm off to take a break... sponsored by **Play** magazine.

HOT GOSSIP

Yakuza 5 on the PSP?

Hot on the heels of the American release of *Yakuza 3* and the Japanese release of *Yakuza 4* comes the announcement of the next game in the series. Known only as 'Project K', the PSP title is set in the same world as the main *Yakuza* series storyline. Director Toshihiro Nagoshi claims that he wants to speak to a younger audience, so of course he sets a game in the seediest red-light district in Japan.



United world of Play

Having escaped Japan for the Golden Week holiday I'm vacationing in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. One thing I've noticed is that **Play** is everywhere. From supermarkets to book stores, you can find the mag on the shelves wherever magazines are sold. So greetings to my UAE readers. Here's a picture of two great things that can be found in the country: the tallest building in the world – the Burj Khalifa – and **Play**.

OBJECTS OF DESIRE

The toys, trinkets and tailoring that has our fires burning this month

Peace Walker Play Arts: Snake

\$49.99 at BigBadToyStore.com

For the first of our *Metal Gear*... er... gear this month Konami has partnered with Square Enix to produce this fetching Snake figure for *Peace Walker*. The Play Arts range is garnering a very solid reputation for Square and with the level of detail in this figure it's easy to see why.

NWZ-W252 Walkman MP3 Player

£49.99 at Sony.co.uk

In terms of innovation in the realm of portable music we haven't seen anything quite as unique as these in a while. This new MP3 player from Sony is one complete unit of headphones and flash memory meaning no wires to get tangled up. Perfect in fact for the more athletic sorts, which is handy because it's also moisture resistant.

Tidus Figure

£16.99 at Play.com

The star of *Final Fantasy X* also made an appearance in *Dissidia* on the PSP and this figure is part of a range that supports that game. *Final Fantasy* probably makes about as much money from its merchandise as it does from its games these days, but then its heroes are iconic.

BIG BOSS



Uniqlo Peace Walker Shirts

£12.99 at Uniqlo.co.uk

Konami and Uniqlo have teamed up to produce a limited edition range of ten T-shirts promoting the release of *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker*. It's an exciting collection, putting Snake out there to the fashionable masses. Possibly his toughest mission yet. Anyway, the collection launches 19 June.

Cerberus Replica

\$34.99 each at BigBadToyStore.com

Not familiar with Cerberus? It just so happens to be the trusted sidearm of the one and only Vincent Valentine. You remember don't you? That guy from *Final Fantasy VII* who might actually have been cooler than Cloud Strife. Controversial we know, but we've said it now. Just mull it over.

My Heart Belongs To You

£14.55 at MySoti.com

How about some Rom-Zom-Corn action on your shirt this month? That's what MySoti is offering with this excellent design for horror fans.

MySoti
15% OFF
these great T-shirts
This Month's Code:
PlayGear193

Big Fluffy Likes To Pose

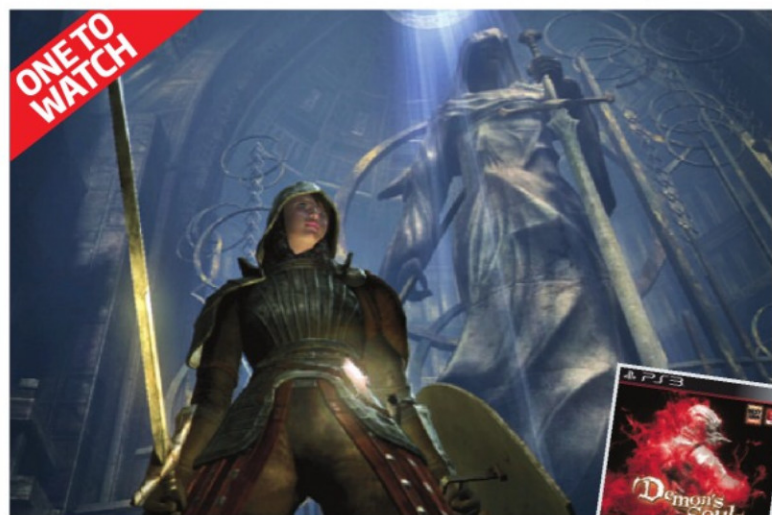
£23.64 at MySoti.com

There's always something kind of endearing about the innocent monster and this quirky image captures exactly that. Now you can strike a pose in style.

CONDITIONS: Enter discount code when placing order. MySoti.com discount code only valid on featured items between 10 June and 7 July. Visit MySoti.com for even more great T-shirts.

IN FOCUS

Things to see and do before the next issue of Play arrives



Demon's Souls

Developer: From Software **Publisher:** Namco Bandai **Release Date:** 25 June
HARD AS NAILS, Japanese as a plateful of raw fish and a side serving of wasabi and utterly brilliant. *Demon's Souls* was one of our games of 2009, but we had to import it from Japan and the US to get to play it. Now, those of you who couldn't muster the courage to import From Software's masterful RPG will be able to pick it up in more comfortable surroundings, like your local games emporium. Plus, you'll get a special edition if you pick up the UK release, which includes a strategy guide, soundtrack and art book with the game. You may have had to wait, but you're getting the royal treatment now.



Toy Story 3

Distributor: Walt Disney Pictures **Director:** Lee Unkrich
Release Date: 18 June
PIXAR RETURNS TO the toy box for a third and quite possibly final time. All the major players have returned including Tim Allen as Buzz Lightyear and Tom Hanks as Woody. *Toy Story 3* kicks off with the toy's owner Andy about to leave for college and the toys worrying about what their futures hold. Cue hilarity.

The Boxer

Artist: Kele **Label:** Polydor **Release Date:** 21 June
THE BOXER IS Bloc Party lead singer Kele Okereke's first solo record and if the direction Bloc Party has taken in recent years is any indication expect something quite electronica based. Whatever the final sound, Kele's unique vocal talents could make for a very good album, so keep your ears peeled.



FIFA World Cup

Why: Because it's been four years **Where:** South Africa **When:** 11 June – 11 July
IT'S FINALLY HERE. The joy, the heartache, the heroics, the villainy and everything in-between. It can only be the most prized championship in the sporting world. No, not the WWE Heavyweight title. It's the FIFA World Cup and it all kicks off when hosts South Africa play Mexico on 11 June.

Solomon Kane

Studio: Entertainment In Video **Director:** Michael J Bassett **Release Date:** 28 June
THE CHARACTER OF Solomon Kane is around 80 years old now having been created by the legendary Robert E Howard, probably most famous for his character Conan. Anyway, this is an origin story that sees Kane go from privateer to puritan hero of early-1600s America with plenty of action to fill the gaps.



Out This Month

For a full rundown of the release dates of every PlayStation game visit www.nowgamer.com/release-dates

Visit **NOWGamer**

FRIDAY 11 JUNE



Green Day: Rock Band

MTV Games **PS3**

£39.99 (game only)

Best Price: £27.93 from TheHut.com

We don't want to be an American idiot, but we do want to play *Green Day: Rock Band* because we're so damn punk rock.

FRIDAY 18 JUNE



Everybody's Tennis

Sony

PSP

£29.99

Best Price: £17.23 from Gameathlon.com

It's *Everybody's Golf* but with tennis instead of golf. Need we go on? It's obviously going to be brilliant even if you don't like tennis.



International Cricket 2010

Codemasters

PS3

£34.99

Best Price: £28.49 from CoolShop.co.uk

As the song says, "I don't like cricket..." Sorry, but *Play* is a cricket-fan-free zone. We'll track down a cricket fan to do the review next month, though.



Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker

Konami

PSP

£29.99

Best Price: £21.86 from ShopTo.net

Described by Ian as an "almost perfect PSP game". Dunno about that, 92% seems more like a "nearly perfect PSP game" really.

FRIDAY 25 JUNE



Backbreaker

505 Games

PS3

£39.99

Best Price: £29.99 from Game.co.uk

Amazing physics meet a somewhat tepid game of American football, in what feels more like a tech demo than a full game.



Demon's Souls

Namco Bandai

PS3

£44.99

Best Price: £34.99 from Gameplay.co.uk

We're so glad this has made it to Europe at last because it's brilliant. Snap it up while you can – it's *strictly* limited edition only.



Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4

Warner

PS3/PSP

£44.99/£29.99

Best Price: £34.70 from Argos.co.uk

We couldn't give a monkey's about *Harry Potter*, but we've got to admit this game looks quite fun from what we've seen.



Pro Cycling Tour Manager: Tour De France 2010

Focus Home Interactive

PSP

£24.99

Best Price: £19.85 from ShopTo.net

This game exists largely for the French market we think, although there are presumably British people who've always dreamed of managing a cyclist.



Trinity Universe

NIS America

PS3

£44.99

Best Price: £29.85 from ShopTo.net

It's another one of those Nippon Ichi games featuring characters from a whole selection of other games. Quite niche, to put it mildly.

FRIDAY 2 JULY



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11

EA

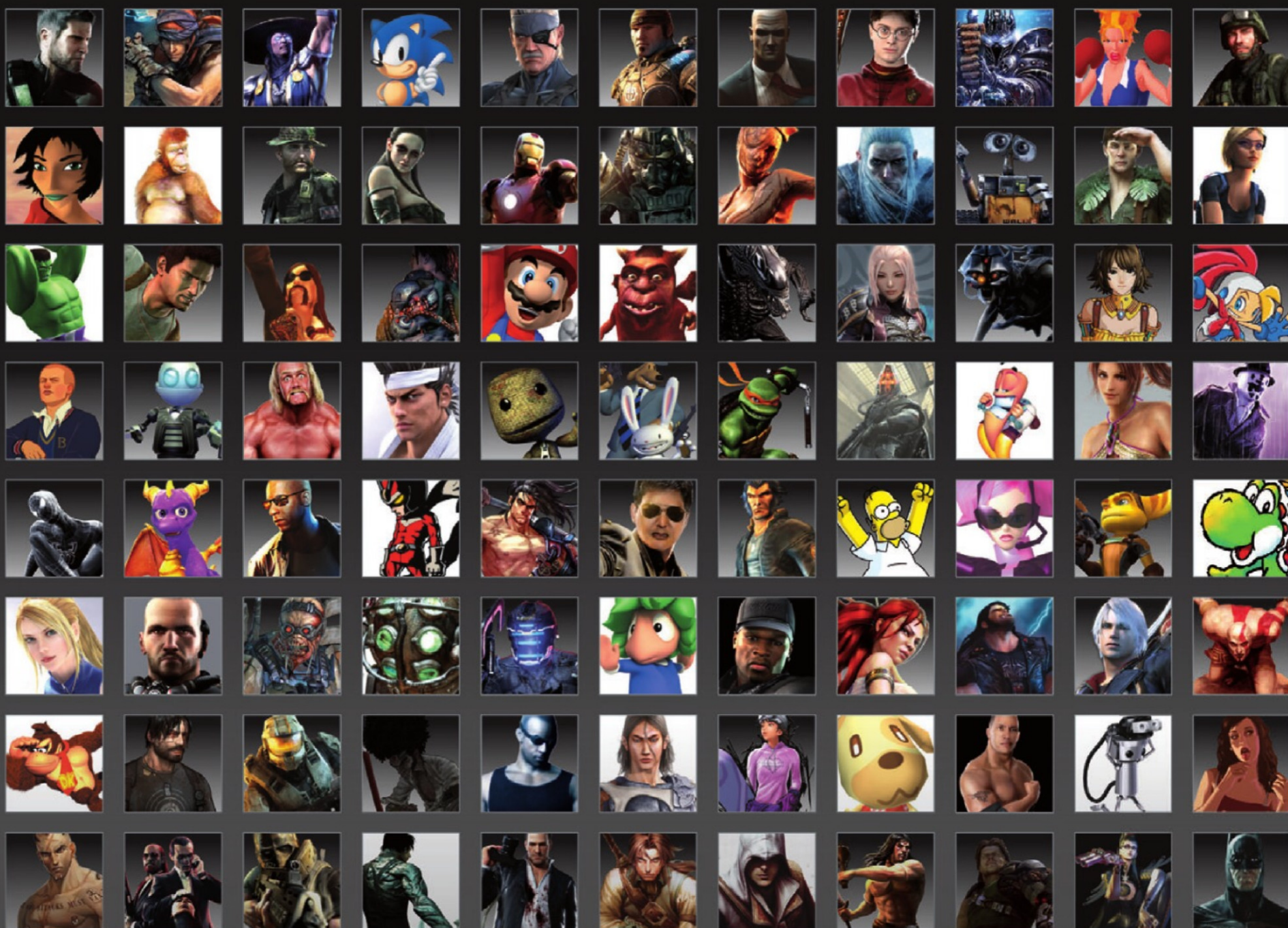
PS3

£49.99

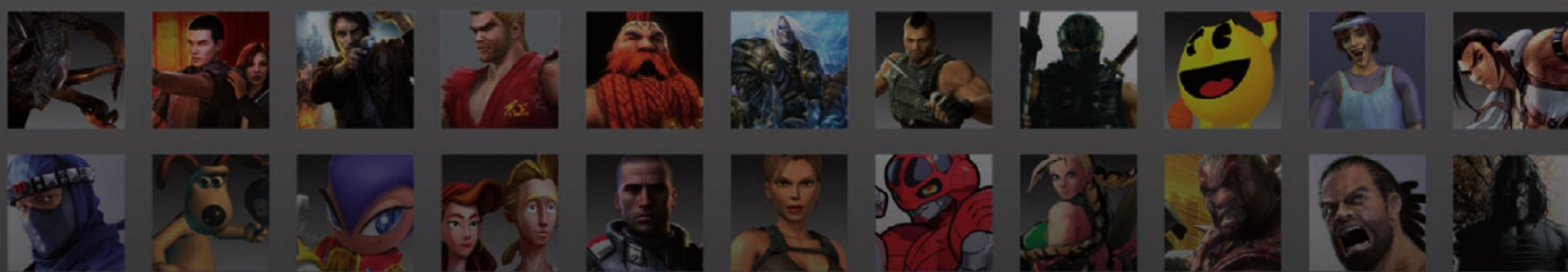
Best Price: £31.99 from JackOfAllGames.co.uk

It's golf, but it's not *Everybody's Golf*, so there are no sexy, French knee-high socks in it. Bah!

E V E R Y F O R M A T
E V E R Y G A M E



O N E C H O I C E



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NowGamer.com



AND FINALLY...
Where hype and hyperbole are welcome

OBAMA SMACKS GAMES AGAIN

It's a 'Barack Attack' or something

THEY SAY: US President Barack Obama has launched another in a long line of scathing attacks on videogames by claiming that PlayStations and Xboxes are actually damaging democracy. His comments came during a speech being given at Hampton University in Virginia. He pointed the finger at all manner of electronic devices, including iPods and the new iPad as well as the PlayStation, for making information into entertainment and making it trivial. "All of this is not only putting new pressures on you; it is putting new pressures on our country and on our democracy," he told students.

WE SAY: Obama has often railed against videogames, encouraging people to get out more, which is quite reasonable. To draw them into his fight against the US media is something else entirely. Games can be a distraction from the problems of the real world, which isn't always a bad thing, but exactly how they are putting pressure on democracy we don't know. Since most of what was said has been taken out of context we're going to let this one slide. We've notified President Obama that one more strike and he's on our naughty list.

WARNING!
GRATUITOUS
IMAGE OF
BARACK
OBAMA

PS3 UPDATE BRICKS AIR FORCE!

US Air Force thrown into chaos by OS removal

THEY SAY: America's flying men and women are up in arms about the PSN update that disabled the 'Install Other OS' function of the PS3. The Air Force had installed a bank of more than 2,000 PS3s with Linux to use for research purposes. Using PS3s made great sense because they were so powerful and much cheaper than similarly powerful PCs. Without Linux, though, they will only be good for researching *Ace Combat* and *Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.*. Not exactly what they had in mind we would wager. The Air Force has expressed its 'disappointment' in the move by Sony.

WE SAY: Oh dear. Perhaps Sony didn't think that one through. But it's not all bad. The only problem for the US forces comes if the PS3s start to break down, in which case getting a replacement that runs Linux will be virtually impossible (can the Air Force use eBay?). In the meantime these 2,000 consoles are not hooked up to PSN so they shouldn't have any problems.



stop
please X



World of Kopcraft

THEY SAY: A Chinese gaming tycoon looks set to buy Liverpool FC. Zhu Jun operates *World Of Warcraft* in China. He even used his money to get him on the pitch against the Reds in 2007.

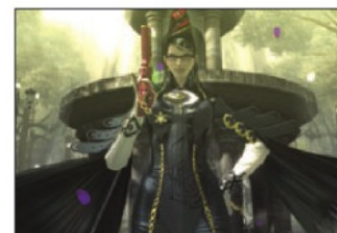
WE SAY: Hard to say at the moment, but he appears to be a front runner. Hideo Kojima has also expressed an interest in Newcastle.



Move needs this game

THEY SAY: I-play Gaming has announced *Pillowfight Girls*, a beat-'em-up for the iPhone that sees two women pillow fighting in a bid to become the pillow fight champion. Surely a Move title in the making.

WE SAY: It would sell, right? It would probably need to be a PSN title, but it could easily outstrip *Uncharted 2* we think.



Porn upsets Platinum

THEY SAY: *Bayonetta* creator Hideki Kamiya has expressed his disappointment on Twitter that people have been making illicit comics featuring Bayonetta. "I hardly think those responsible hold any love for the game," he said.

WE SAY: Such comics in Japan happen often and he probably should have expected it, but isn't *Bayonetta* sexy enough anyway?

Keep Up With Play



Never fall behind with **Imagine eShop**

Fallen behind with your **Play** purchases? Been out of the country for a while and found yourself in some mad, inhospitable place that doesn't stock the world's greatest PlayStation magazine? Fear not. You need never miss an issue of **Play** or find your collection full of holes thanks to the **Imagine eShop**. There you can buy the latest issue of the magazine direct, subscribe to **Play** and even pick up those elusive back issues that you may have missed. We know how important it is that you get every last scrap of **Play** brilliance in your brains. The eShop is a veritable Aladdin's cave of **Play** goodness and you can access it all at www.imagineshop.co.uk.

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Play team on their Twitter feeds to get all the latest news, opinions and gossip as it happens from the **Play** office? Get immediate reactions to the newest games being reviewed, links to cool features and all the other weird thoughts and ideas Keith, Gavin, Jon and Ian have to share. You can find links to each of their Twitter accounts at Play-Mag.co.uk or go direct with @PlayMagKeith, @PlayMagGav, @PlayMagJon or @PlayMagIan.

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the latest games, reveal upcoming titles we've had the chance to see first hand and wax lyrical about great PlayStation gaming moments. Our monthly podcast show is always packed full of opinion, facts, news and usually someone having to leave to have a little bit of a cry. We pull no punches on the **Play** Podcast. You can download individual episodes from www.Play-Mag.co.uk.

Go to www.Play-Mag.co.uk for daily updates and features

Reload

The very best of the Play Blog this month

Top 5 opening sequences



5 GUITAR HERO: METALLICA

The purpose of an opening sequence should be to set the tone and get you into

your 'role', and this is achieved perfectly by *Guitar Hero: Metallica's* intro. Entering a packed arena to the roars of 60,000 fans and, of course, Ennio Morricone's *The Ecstasy Of Gold*, then launching into *For Whom The Bell Tolls* – you are Metallica.



4 LITTLEBIG PLANET

What better way to introduce us to *LBP* than having us run Sackboy through an

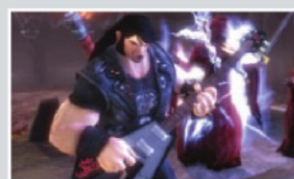
opening credit sequence made using the game's tools? The icing on the cake is Stephen Fry talking us through it, while the filling is the Noveltones' *Left Bank Two*, a piece of music that simply means arts and crafts. In short, the whole thing is perfect.



3 ONIMUSHA: WARLORDS

It might be almost ten years old, but *Onimusha's* opening movie is still one of the

best. Approximately \$8 million was pumped into it, a huge budget for the time, and we reckon a fair chunk of that must've gone into the first five minutes. It feels like a proper movie, with an epic soundtrack and top-notch cinematic direction.



2 BRUTAL LEGEND

Brutal Legend's opening is ridiculously over-the-top and full of blood, fire, comedy

and metal, but underneath all the theatrics it's also a clever intro to a character with more depth than it first seems. It's not apparent at the time, but Eddie's monologue about what makes a good roadie is actually telling you what the game is really about.



1 CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

MW2 might have gone silly and spoiled the ongoing narrative, but in its own right *COD 4* still had some of the best storytelling moments in any game ever and the most effective opening sequence. It uses the first-person view to set the scene while you're driven through a city in the midst of a coup while revolutionary leader Khaled Al-Asad addresses the nation on the radio. Only at the end of the sequence does it become clear that it is you that has been overthrown and you who is about to be executed.

Six games rejected by George Lucas (maybe)

> **STAR WARS: THE HORSE UNLEASHED** – Based on the niche *G.I. Jockey* series, this was rejected on the grounds that it was merely a stupid pun and would bring nothing of worth to gaming.

> **STAR WARS: GRAND THEFT STARFIGHTER** – Rejected not for being a shameless rip-off, but because no one could figure out how you were meant to space-jack a Star Destroyer. Ah, logistics.

> **STAR WARS: SPACEBALLS EDITION** – Rejected on the grounds that George Lucas doesn't know how to do comedy, and so knew he wouldn't be able to do this version justice. Or something.

> **STAR WARS: SIM JABBA THE HUTT** – Rejected because the buying public isn't into the whole notion of playing a game where all you do is slither around as a giant slug, eating weird frog things and laughing at scruffy smugglers.

> **STAR WARS INTERNATIONAL FACE-PUNCHER: JAR JAR BINKS EDITION** – This game, controlled with Move, would involve constantly punching Jar Jar Binks in the face. Rejected because no one would ever play anything ever again, and so it would ruin the entire videogames economy.

> **STAR WARS: JEDI KNIGHT SEQUEL** – *sob*



STAT ATTACK
20,000
 body animations
 created by mo-cap
 for use in *Heavy Rain*

The REEL Heavy Rain

IF REPORTS FROM Deadline are correct, we could soon see a *Heavy Rain* movie. The site reports that the rights are close to being picked up by Unique Features. But that's just reportage of apparent fact. What we want is blind speculation as to what the *Heavy Rain* movie could, should or would feature:

- > The film, clocking in at 93 minutes, features 64 minutes of Ethan Mars shaving, urinating, trying to go downstairs without being dressed and failing, procrastinating, smashing his wife's china and drinking orange juice. The remaining time is a harrowing scene of Mars shouting "JAAASOOON!" repeatedly while clowns stand around looking scary.
- > Gratuitous nudity of lady parts, as well as man-bottoms. At one point in the film, the camera will 'glitch' on a corner and you'll be able to see a

complete, bare lady for 30 seconds or more. This will be hailed as the most daring filmmaking in decades.

- > All of the characters will continually walk into walls and also be hit and knocked over by floating symbols and words looping around and crashing into them.
- > The grand reveal of the Origami Killer is made. The audience is shocked to find it is none other than Brian Blessed who committed these vile murders.
- > At the beginning of every scene the main character will tell the audience exactly how they feel, what they're thinking and what they intend to do in the upcoming few minutes. This will anger us, as we don't like it when actors tell us how they feel. It makes us angry. One Oscar, please.

<http://bit.ly/gsbzrm>

Top 5 greatest PlayStation assassins

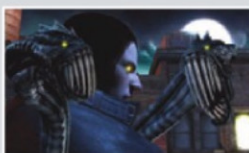
> **EZIO** – Ezio was significantly more skilled than Altair by the end of the game and had a much greater variety of killing moves to choose from for his hits. What's more he's fighting on the side of free will and expression. We're all for that.



> **AGENT 47** – Genetically engineered to be the best hitman in history, 47 comes with quite a billing. That's all well and good but it doesn't explain his use of costumes, which is our favourite thing about him. We respect a man who dresses for the occasion.



> **JACKIE ESTACADO** – The 21-year-old killer from *The Darkness* is the hitman with a heart, but when his girlfriend is brutally murdered by his former bosses, Jackie is all business and devilishly brilliant.



> **TRAVIS TOUCHDOWN** – Travis must work his way through a slew of assassins in order to be number one. Armed with his strobe light sword, he's the ultimate game geek turned pro-killer out there. Arguably not a large club to be in charge of.



> **YOU** – Join the Dark Brotherhood in *Oblivion* and you're on your way to working your way up the ranks of the assassins' guild. However, once you start taking orders from the guild's statue guardian and are told to kill everyone in the Dark Brotherhood, you suddenly take things up a notch.



<http://bit.ly/cu5BRH>

Our favourite socks ever... Everybody's Golf: World Tour

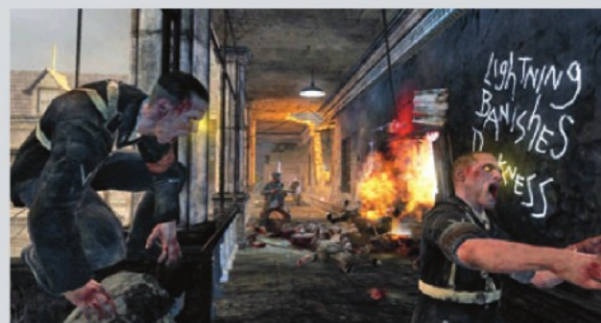
Couple of weeks back we revealed our favourite pants ever, so we figured it's about time we discussed our favourite socks.

Now, Sophie here might be only 4'9", but we assure you she's 18 years old and therefore not 'out of bounds'. And anyway, they're just socks, right? Nothing wrong with admiring a young golfing lady's socks, is there? Aren't they nice socks? Don't you think? Nicer than ours. Ours smell and have holes in.

Anyway, next week... our favourite vest ever.

<http://bit.ly/a0c0Wf>

5 Call Of Duty: Black Ops bonus game suggestions



- 1 Companion Cuban (Bay Of Pigs) – You must carry your Companion Cuban through a series of puzzles and survive the pre-Cuban Missile Crisis Bay Of Pigs incident.
- 2 Wack-A-Vietcong (Vietnam War) – This variation on Wack-A-Mole involves hitting Vietcong over the head as they emerge from their tunnels.
- 3 Polar Bear Wrestling (Arctic Conflict) – We're not sure what Arctic war *Black Ops* is referring to in its trailer, but we think a little Polar Bear rumble isn't out of the question.
- 4 Shock And Fore (Gulf War) – Heading back to the First Gulf War, we could compete in the Kuwait PGA Tour. The courses would likely be full of mines and sand traps.
- 5 Starfox Hole (Space Conflict) – Something else the trailer shows is an astronaut about to go up into space and so we're thinking an on-rails space shooter wouldn't be out of the question.

<http://bit.ly/b0b0vm>

5 things we'd do differently with... Call Of Duty



- 1 Make A Driving Game: With jeeps that fire heat-seeking rockets and lay down landmines. You could make it really gritty and *Modern Warfare*-y. Like sand and stuff. That's gritty.
- 2 Make A Gardening Game: Something like *Animal Crossing*. 'Basra Crossing' maybe. It'd have to be a mature title as kids shouldn't be exposed to growing poppy seeds.
- 3 FIFA World War 2010: Football! It's what makes the world go round. Fact. So, *Call Of Duty* should see international disputes solved on the field of soccer, not battle.
- 4 Modern Warfare-Ware: A mini-game collection using PS Move that teaches players about the day-to-day routines of the modern soldier such as gun cleaning and drills.
- 5 Call Of Duty Sports Resort: R&R is just as vital to the life of a soldier as fighting is and the military keep fit plan is one of the most rigorous in the world. A fitness game it is then.

<http://bit.ly/b0b0vm>

PLAY₀₀ Investigates

The inside scoop on everything PlayStation

A LEAP OF FAITH

What does Bungie's multiplatform future mean for PlayStation?

BUNGIE IN NUMBERS
25 million
games sold worldwide

Surprise, shock, outrage, befuddlement. These were a handful of the feelings expressed by gamers worldwide when Activision and Bungie announced a deal to publish the next game from the *Halo* developer. Some hailed it as a massive coup for Activision, others as a slap in the face to Microsoft. We sat back and watched the whole thing unfold, trying to assess both the deal itself and the reaction to it. It seems that even without the word 'Halo' being thrown around, Bungie is a company that attracts discussion.

If you've been under a rock somewhere or just really busy playing *MW2* online still, then let's have another quick look at the deal. Having put pen to paper Bungie has committed to making at least one multiplatform game over the course of the next ten years, which Activision will publish. We have no idea if any money changed hands on the deal, but we do know that all Activision gets is the publishing rights. Bungie remains independent, meaning it can work with and on anything it likes in the meantime. Bungie also controls the intellectual property for its new game, meaning that in 2020 it could make another game in the same universe and cut Activision out.

The question that was getting asked a lot just after the announcement of this deal was, 'why?'. Why would Bungie team up with Activision given its very public troubles involving *Call Of Duty* developer Infinity Ward? Why would it sign away the next decade to making games for one company? Well, two important factors need to be kept in mind. First, as we mentioned just a moment ago, Bungie is keeping hold of the IP rights. Unlike *Halo*

or *Call Of Duty*, Bungie will own the new game and all the ideas that go into it. This current deal does not allow Activision to outsource development to anyone else in the future. And second, Activision has a shed load of money and a little over six months ago was responsible for the biggest launch in entertainment history.

Money talks. Activision knows how to push a game into the mainstream. *Modern Warfare 2* managed it partly

because it was a great game and partly because it had a great developer, but a lot of it was down to the marketing. Bungie wants that. Without the *Halo* brand attached to it this new IP could have been lost in the crowd. With the might of Activision behind it that's simply not going to happen.

But if you really want to know why, just listen to Bungie itself for the answer. "We chose to partner with Activision on our

YOUR SAY

Do you welcome Bungie coming to PS3?

There may be some people who hold a grudge, but only good can come of it – they have a lot of experience, and even if it takes them a while to get accustomed to the PS3, they will surely make good games – **UberCool_UberGoff**

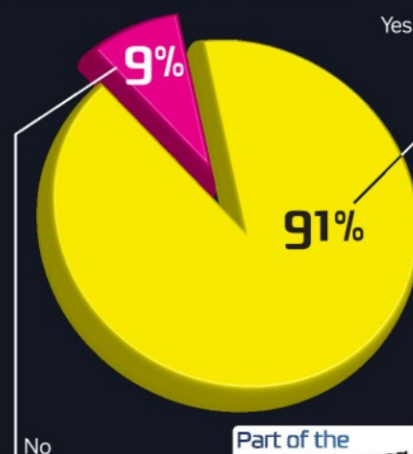
It's a real shame that Bungie decided to go with Activision, I just won't buy their games any more. It's not like they're going to make anything that's as good as *Halo* ever again anyway – **Akuma**

I've seen a few game plays of *Reach* and from what I'm seeing it looks very refined and exactly what *Halo* fans will be looking for. So whatever they make I'll be excited for it, but Activision I will have to try block them out – **skrudge7**

I've never played any of their games, but I'm happy they're going multiplatform. Activision have been mentioning the top-quality work they produce, it's only a positive them working with PS3 – **the bossman**

The more developers we have the tougher the competition. Market economics would mean they have to work harder to get our money, which is better for us as gamers – **koppert79**

Join the Play Nation by signing up to our forum at www.play-mag.co.uk/forum



Part of the
Now Gamer
Network

BUNGIE IN NUMBERS
\$1.5
 billion made from
 Bungie games



● Master Chief is easily Bungie's most famous creation.



● Oni is the only Bungie game to have come out on a PlayStation format.



● Myth was a Warcraft-esque RTS. Even Halo started life as an RTS.



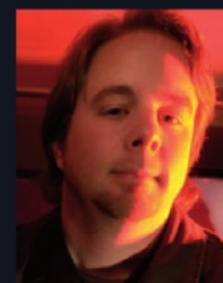
● Marathon, a Mac exclusive, was Bungie's first FPS.



● Halo's multiplayer spawned the brilliant Red Vs Blue machinima.

Bungie Speaks

Brian Jarrard, community director for Bungie, gives us the inside scoop on the deal with Activision and the reasons behind it



They don't come much bigger in the publishing world than Activision. Was that the main reason you chose them as your publishing partners for your new IP?

We were initially drawn to Activision based on their position and success as a global multiplatform publisher but ultimately it was their alignment and support of what's most important to Bungie that made this the perfect partnership. Maintaining ownership of our new IP, having creative control over the vision for our next universe and remaining an independent studio were critical points for Bungie as we embarked on plans for the next decade.

The ten-year publishing deal suggests you have a very definite idea for the schedule of your new IP. Would that be accurate?

Yes, the relationship with Activision was structured around Bungie's vision of how we plan to build and foster our new universe and the types of stories and experiences we'll share with our fans over the course of a decade.

In many ways we can look back at how much we learned over the past ten years creating and evolving the *Halo* universe. We never had the luxury of a long-term vision and plan when *Halo* began and instead it fell into place in real-time as the universe grew and matured. Despite not having a formal plan, we still started out first and foremost building a rich, engaging universe and from there, the pieces fell into place. Going forward, we have taken what we've learned from all of the studio's past game universes and built out a real framework and vision we're all very excited to realise and share with our fans.

Would you say your new IP is characteristic of the kind of games you're best known for or could we be in for a surprise?

Bungie will stay true to its roots in the sense that first and foremost, we are a studio that builds interesting and compelling universes that players want to spend time in. Our next new action game universe is being envisioned the same way.

Beyond that it's safe to say you'll see the core pillars of all previous Bungie games continue to evolve and carry forward into our future projects. Engrossing stories, technical innovation, beautiful art, exhilarating gameplay and a strong sense of community and socialisation will continue to be at the epicentre of our future games.

You're going multiplatform again after a long period of exclusivity. Did you feel that was essential if you wanted to keep Bungie viable as an independent studio?

It comes down to this – as storytellers we're always trying to share our universe and experiences with the largest possible audience. It's incredibly exciting to a team of creative people to think about brand-new ways to create new connections with players and meaningful engagements with our universe across multiple platforms and devices.

Have you had much time to look at and work with the PS3 hardware yet? Have you been bringing people in with experience on the format to help the transition to multiplatform development?

We're evaluating a wide array of platforms and devices that fit our vision for the types of experiences we want to deliver with our next universe. While Bungie has certainly become intimately familiar with the Xbox hardware over the past decade, we have some of the best engineers in the industry and the challenges associated with moving to multiplatform are invigorating. That said, Activision as a partner has a lot of internal expertise and experience to bring to the discussions to help our teams make the right decisions.

Are you expecting any kind of backlash from PS3 enthusiasts who have spent much of the last decade attacking your previous games?

We're not expecting PS3 enthusiast backlash. Instead, we'd hope for the contrary – we're very excited to be able to share our next universe with a broader audience on the platform of their choosing. More people will be able to share in our experiences than ever before and that's awesome for all gamers, regardless of which platform you own.

next IP because of their global reach, multiplatform experience and marketing expertise," Bungie president Harold Ryan explained in a press release. "From working together over the past nine months on this agreement, it is clear that Activision supports our commitment to giving our fans the best possible gaming experiences."

Global reach, multiplatform experience and marketing expertise. As an independent studio that's a tough

proposition to turn down. And what does that mean for PlayStation? Only the biggest games publisher in the world joining forces with one of the most fervently followed studios on the planet and making at least one, if not many, new action games that will all be coming to PS3. But that's just the headline news.

Bungie has been a pioneer of the online community on Xbox Live and many of the features it introduced. Online console gaming was brought to the masses thanks to the *Halo* series (a

mantle that has since been taken up by Activision's *Call Of Duty*). The use of co-op through the main campaign of *Halo: Combat Evolved* helped to popularise such modes and Xbox Live's Party system is virtually a carbon copy of the one that Bungie created to help teams stick together online between matches.

And that's just the online space.

When you take a look at the gameplay features Bungie has helped to push, the impact of the developer becomes more and more

obvious. Vehicles became a much bigger part of the FPS genre thanks to *Halo*. Regenerating health became a staple of all action genres way beyond the FPS and grenades became really important all of a sudden. If Bungie managed to do all this on a single format in the space of almost ten years, just imagine what it's going to be able to do over the next ten on PS3.

Activision knows
 how to push a game
 into the mainstream

BUNGIE IN NUMBERS
2
 billion
 hours spent
 online playing
 Bungie games

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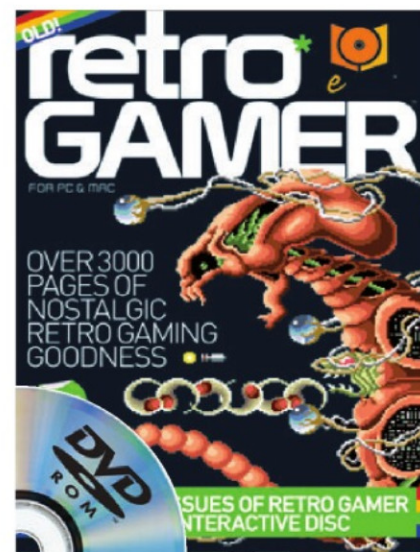
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BLURRED VISION!

WIN AN HDTV AND A COPY OF BLUR

Win a 42-inch HDTV!

As the title of the game suggests, in *Blur* the cars move so fast and there's so much racing carnage that only a big screen TV will do it justice – so to help you out Activision is going to give away a lovely big HDTV with every copy of *Blur* sold. We're kidding of course – the only way you're going to get your hands on a brand-new 42-inch LG HD television with your copy of *Blur* is if you are the winner of our competition.

Blur is all about taking down your opponent and using your brain to launch the right attacks at the right time so it's only fitting that we ask you to use your noodle to win the prize. Simply answer our *Blur*-based question correctly and you'll be in with a chance of winning this amazing prize. Four runners-up will also bag themselves a copy of the game.

If you are not one of the lucky winners you can still grab yourself a copy of *Blur* as it's available to buy now.

WHAT OTHER RACING FRANCHISE IS BLUR DEVELOPER, BIZARRE CREATIONS FAMOUS FOR CREATING?

- A. PROJECT GOTHAM RACING
- B. GRAN TURISMO
- C. BURNOUT



To submit your answer, simply email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject line 'Blur competition' plus your name and address. The closing date is **7 July 2010**. Be aware that answers must be submitted to the email address only, any left through the comments section of our website will be automatically disqualified.



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PLAY. 's THE PSP



The PSP gets a hard time of things: laughed at; derided; forgotten. But we're standing tall in the handheld's corner. We love you, PSP, and here's why...



The games

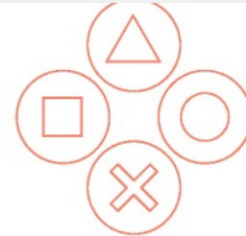
It's obvious, but it's something that people seem to immediately forget about when they're unfairly slating the PSP. A system should live or die by its games, and in that case: *ModNation Racers*, *Half-Minute Hero*, *God Of War: Chains Of Olympus*, *Chinatown Wars*, countless Minis, *echoshift*, *Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops*, *WipEout Pure*, *Disgaea* and *Tekken 6*, among others, mean this is a system that lives *hard*. The DS and iPhone may have the market cornered for throwaway five-minute distractions, but you can only get a full-on handheld gaming experience with PSP these days. Then there's *Power Stone Collection*, *Patapon*...

Versatility, flexibility and adaptability

We'll admit that the PSP doesn't stand favourably in the shadow of the iPhone/iPad or the increasing prevalence of netbooks, but that doesn't mean its functionality is any less impressive. It's an area Sony marketed the hell out of in the early PSP days, but it does seem to go forgotten now: you can watch movies on the handheld; listen to music; take a peek at your favourite photos; and browse the internet. And we haven't even mentioned any legal grey areas yet (nor will we, but you get the point). There's no denying the PSP is still a thoroughly versatile and incredibly useful system.



PLAY LOVES THE PSP



They're quite cheap now

On release we were expected to pay £179 for the PSP and £225 for the PSPgo. The original PSP has been out for nearly five years in the UK, meaning its price has been falling for almost that long. What this translates to is a wonderful, versatile and powerful handheld costing you around £70 second-hand (with a few games). Of course, when you factor in an extra memory stick and spare batteries the overall price rises to the £100 mark. But that's still a steal for the value for money you will get out of games like *Monster Hunter Freedom*.

PSone classics everywhere you go

It's easy to argue that the PSone games available through PSN are easy to ignore, if not throwaway additions to your library. But it's also easy to say "shut up, you're wrong". *Final Fantasy VII*: on a bus. *Kula World*: on a train. *Metal Gear Solid*: in a bush. The possibilities are endless, and the nostalgia value – when combined with the fact a lot of these games are still brilliant to play – cannot be understated. Other emulators may be legally unsound, but PSone games are above board and damn sexy on PSP. Oh, and *Future Cop: LAPD*: in a cable car!



It's portable. Really, it is

It's not a stretch to say the original PSP isn't a pocket-sized console. In fact, neither is the PSPgo really. Still, if you have a bag – and who doesn't? – and are going on a long journey, the PSP will serve you well all the way. As long as you can charge the battery, or have some spares. So yes, there are caveats, but it doesn't change the fact that you can take some truly great games on the go with you, wherever it is you end up going.



IT'S ONLY FIVE reasons, but it's five reasons enough. The PSP is a wonderful games machine, more successful than people give it credit for (since when was 60 million sales a failure?) and has some fantastic games available for it. If you've ignored it or simply haven't bothered getting one, you're missing out. We love the PSP, and we love it for some very good reasons.

MAKING A MOVE

Play gets some serious hands-on time with Move and explains why it's quite the Wii-beater...

Is it a high-definition Wii? Yes, it is. There's no way around it; PlayStation Move's first crop of titles brings very little that's new to the motion-control party in terms of as-yet-unseen game types. But, how could it? Nintendo's fun-mining device has been chomping at that quarry wall for the best part of four years and frankly, if it hasn't already unearthed every treasure to be found, we'll eat our red Mario hats.

But it's important to define what exactly does set Move apart from the Wii, even if the answers are obvious; power – raw, high-def power – accuracy on

every possible plane of movement, and finally body-mapping: unlike the Wii, Move utilises the PlayStation Eye to map your somatic movements in conjunction with those of your hands. What this breaks down to in real terms is a more coherent, cemented experience than anything we've previously felt while Nintendo-bound, even if the concepts themselves aren't currently as original as we might have hoped.

So come join us on an odyssey, where we ritually slaughter the pig of ignorance, while fuelling the hype-furnace just enough to sizzle the bacon of excitement.



MAINSTREAM: SPORTS CHAMPIONS TABLE TENNIS

Sports Champions is like Wii Sports. We're not going to suggest that it's trying to be radically different. Wii Sports is a huge success and this is Sony's version of that game. And while the developer will no doubt shake with rage at such a description, sometimes the truth hurts. That's not to say that this is a bad thing, however. Nintendo's Wii is stylistically bound and gagged by its technological limits. Games which attempt to ape real life don't do well on the format because the graphical grunt falls so far short. Instead we get super-deformed heads (the development community's name for heads with one polygon) and cell-shaded 3D, a technique which magically transforms dodgy graphics into slightly dodgy ones.

Table Tennis is an interesting one because not only does it not have to utilise graphically obfuscating cheapness in order to look passable, the level of accuracy in the mapping of your movements is really quite astonishing. The slightest twist of the wrist gives an immediate corresponding change to the attitude of your paddle. It's so accurate in fact, that as a description 'intuitiveness' doesn't make the grade, where 'superintuituality' just about does.

Table Tennis is also one of the titles to use body-mapping, in this case to read whether you're in the forehand or backhand position, and indeed an almost microscopic understanding of the direction your body is facing; a factor which affects your shots just as it would in real life.

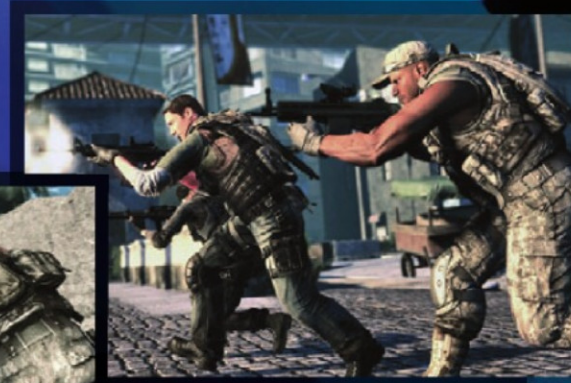


CASUAL: TV SUPERSTARS

The Wii is full of these types of games. But the PS3 is clearly able to achieve so much more and on such a higher plane of fidelity.

Consisting of a bunch of fun mini-games for up to four players, our TV Superstars demo began with *Frockstar*, a catwalk simulator with an emphasis on silliness. Mapping your face in normal, happy and angry expressions, the game then creates a model for you, which due to our hairy masculine bodies, we insisted be a skinny pig-tailed teenaged girl in a frock. The game itself is simple; walk the catwalk, following the on-screen prompts and vogue it up. Later, you get to dress and make up your character and do the whole thing again. We hate to admit this – since there were no tanks evident – but we had a really great time with *Frockstar*. For shame.

Later we had a brief go on some other mini-games including a paintball-cannon painting-by-numbers game, a wheel of death where we had to jump obstacles and a kind of *Hole In The Wall*-style affair in which we had to strike poses.



HARDCORE: SOCOM 4

SOCOM 4 could have gone two ways. Either the crowbarring of a brand-new control system into such an established set of mechanics as those we expect to find in a third-person tactical shooter would feel awkward and flaccid, or it might bring a new animal to the party altogether. The design ethos of Natal – according to the Microsoft PR whiz kids – is to remove the ‘barrier’ created by the presence of a physical controller and what’s interesting is how easily Move manages this in the case of *SOCOM 4*. It really was a matter of seconds before the skills we’d learned from the Wii, *Gears Of War*, using a TV remote, whisking an egg or waving a sausage at a friend, to lend greater weight to our words, came to fruition. Although the game is far from easy, mastering its controls took seconds.

Aiming was taken care of as you’d expect; moving the Move, moves the reticule, while the edges of the screen provide a soft push zone in which you can spin your viewing direction up, down or through 360 degrees. At first, aiming is tough, but not in a Wii sense – you know, where you point at a part of the screen and the reticule attempts to follow an imaginary house-fly fiercely protecting a tiny crummet – but in an accuracy sense. Such is its pin-point precision, you could shoot the hair off a dog’s back if only your touch were delicate enough. With gripping of the trigger button on the accompanying navigation controller (Nunchuck) pulling your character into cover, it all feels very natural and fun.

Our only reservation so far is how long this may stand up to more than a ten-minute blast, especially since the *SOCOM* series has substantial leanings towards online squad play.

CONCLUSION:

What you all want to know essentially – because you’ve all been asking us this question – is whether or not it’s better than the Wii. The answer is ‘yes, we think so’, but there’s another reason to get excited, too. We cannot imagine Sony allowing a never-ending waterfall of sloppy third-party games to destroy the format in the way that Nintendo arguably has. If Sony can keep the notion of quality control firmly at the forefront of its mo-con ethos, the last bastion of Nintendoites may finally find reason to say a teary and heartfelt goodbye. Until the next *Mario*/*Metroid*/*Zelda* at least, anyway.

PES 2011'S FIVE SHOTS AT GLORY

IT'S GETTING QUITE MESSI OUT THERE

WE HEAR THE promises every year, but with the *Pro Evo* series floundering in FIFA's wake it's time for Seabass and co to be mix things up a bit. But what are the five main ways *PES* is going to remain in contention for the title?

POWER PLAY

Power bars will now be playing a much more important role in proceedings in *PES 2011*. Applying certain amounts of power to your passes or shots will be paramount as the game will no longer guarantee the weight of a pass or the placement of a strike. What this means from a competitive perspective is that you'll be able to spread your passes wherever you want across the pitch – into space as well as straight to the player. This opens up a whole new world of potential playing styles, and means we might be less annoyed with stray balls. If it's our fault, of course.



● Body strength will be vital for keeping hold of the ball.



● This would be quite a team.

CUSTOM CONTROL

A whole raft of new player animations partnered with even finer 360-degree control should make player movement more realistic than ever. A reworked contact system for body weight, tougher dribbling and your choice of preset moves for the right analogue stick should also improve things. The game's increased pace, along with the openness of control and refinements to already-present systems have the potential to make *Pro Evolution Soccer 2011* a genuinely interesting entry to a series. More control can only ever be good for the game and help put it on a much more even keel with FIFA.

TEAM PLAY

New AI will mean that your defence shouldn't come running out of position any more, leaving you to dictate play more closely. Momentum and the pace of your passing will also affect the sort of runs players will make and the speed of your attacks. Exploiting space is key and could be a real make-or-break in every game you play, rather than the usual, formulaic way in which matches play out. It also means that we won't be able to blame the AI for making mistakes, as the control responsibility will rest on us.

● AI is said to be much improved, meaning you'll only have yourself to blame for many of your team's mistakes.



● Power bars will play a much more important role when it comes to passing and shooting in PES 2011.

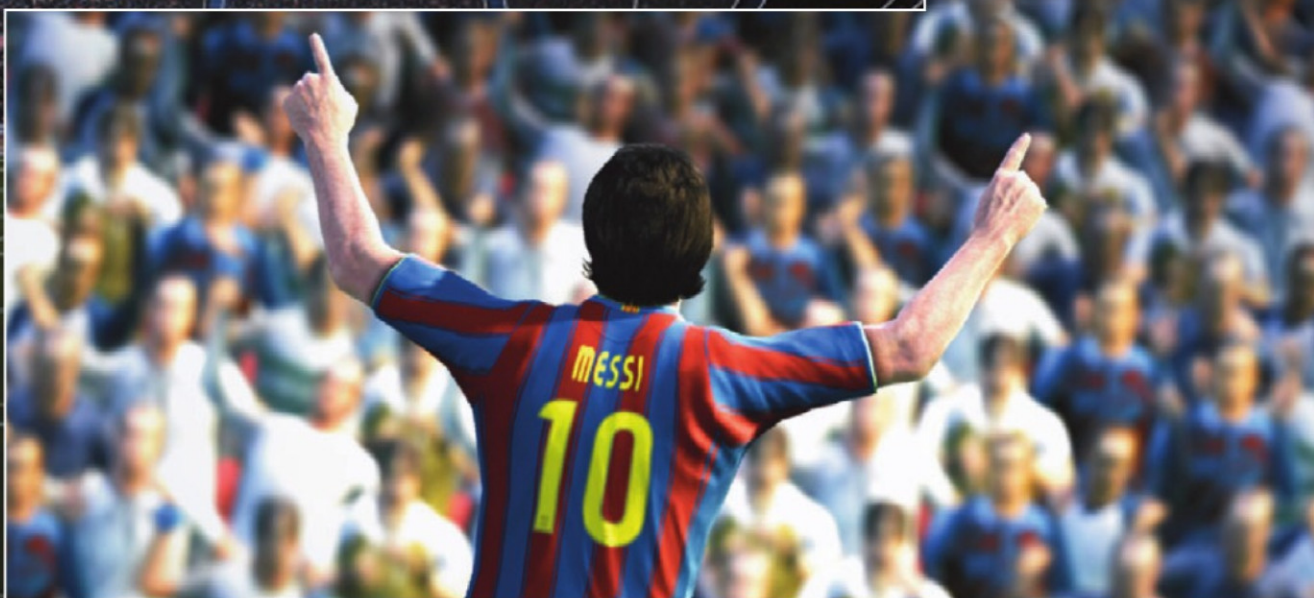
STAMINA STATS

The fatigue of your players will have a much greater impact on them than before. Running all over the pitch with a player will result in him becoming less accurate with his passing, so you'll need to think more carefully about how you use him and when to make those bursts up field. This could also open the game up so it is no longer dominated by the fastest players, with the lumbering, stamina-laden oxen on the field likelier to hold their own over the whole 90 minutes. Just like in real football, then.

● Can PES 2011 become the best in the world?

ONLINE MASTER

After much demand, Master League will now be playable online, allowing you to manage your own club and compete with other players around the world – not only in matches, but also for players. This could be PES 2011's greatest new feature both if handled well by the development team and if it's something the gaming public manage to get on board with. It could be that ultimate combination of *Football Manager* and playable footy online that we've always craved (but never actually talked about). No word on any other online modes as of yet, though.



TWO WORLDS COLLIDE

Play takes a closer look at Capcom's latest beat-'em-up revamp as Marvel Vs Capcom 3: Fate Of Two Worlds is announced for PS3

SHADY TYPES

Who is hiding behind the announced roster of Marvel Vs Capcom 3?

NAME: Super-Skrull

AFFILIATION: Marvel

BEST KNOWN FROM: *Fantastic Four*

BIO: Super-Skrull has all of the powers of the Fantastic Four, meaning he's one of the most powerful creatures in the Marvel universe. His rise up the ranks is a surprise as he's largely unknown outside Marvel circles.

NAME: Dormammu/
Mephisto

AFFILIATION: Marvel

BEST KNOWN FROM: Various Marvel series

BIO: We're veering towards backing this character as Dormammu from the Doctor Strange series, a ruler from an alternate dimension. That would make Strange a must, too, of course (win!). Mephisto would be cool, as well.

NAME: Trish

AFFILIATION: Capcom

BEST KNOWN FROM: *Devil May Cry* series

BIO: Created by the demon Mundus, Trish's demonic background makes her a formidable foe. She's a little on the outskirts as a Capcom hero, but the publisher is promising lots of characters in *Marvel Vs Capcom 3*.

NAME: Deadpool

AFFILIATION: Marvel

BEST KNOWN FROM: *Deadpool*

BIO: Wisecracking Deadpool started off his life with Marvel as a villain, but gradually worked his way into the good graces of fans with his sharp tongue as well as his sharp swords. Expect plenty of fireworks when he fights.

NAME: Chun-Li

AFFILIATION: Capcom

BEST KNOWN FROM: *Street Fighter* series

BIO: Chun-Li's inclusion in this game is about as obvious as that of Ryu. She's barely missed a *Street Fighter* game or crossover since she arrived in *Street Fighter II*. Something about that Spinning Bird Kick we guess.

NAME: Dr Doom

AFFILIATION: Marvel

BEST KNOWN FROM: *Fantastic Four*

BIO: One of the most successful villains in the Marvel universe, Victor von Doom runs the nation of Latveria, which is pretty impressive. Equally as impressive is his array of abilities, which seem limitless at times.

NAME: Dante/Nero

AFFILIATION: Capcom

BEST KNOWN FROM: *Devil May Cry* series

BIO: Rounded off hair and a sword points very heavily to one of these *Devil May Cry* heroes, but we would be hard-pressed to tell you which one. Best guess is that ultimately both will star in the game in some form.

NAME: Frank West

AFFILIATION: Capcom

BEST KNOWN FROM: *Dead Rising*

BIO: We doubt we'll be seeing him in the new *Dead Rising*, but Frank West is already established as a Capcom hero having fought in *Tatsunoko Vs Capcom* on the Wii. We really want him to have a camera attack of some kind.

NAME: Captain America

AFFILIATION: Marvel

BEST KNOWN FROM: *The Avengers*

BIO: Leader of The Avengers and all-round good guy, Cap has been kicking around these games for a while now. Throw in the fact that a movie is on the way and you know Marvel wants its purest superhero to be a part of the action.

NAME: Felicia

AFFILIATION: Capcom

BEST KNOWN FROM: *Darkstalkers* series

BIO: The other great female lead from the *Darkstalkers* series, Felicia is a particular favourite of the cosplay crowd and also those who like to look at cosplayers. That has to be one of the skimpiest outfits ever.



CONFIRMED COMBATANTS

The first six names out of the MVC 3 hat



NAME: Ryu

AFFILIATION: Capcom

LAST SEEN IN: *Super Street Fighter IV*

BIO: What Capcom beat-'em-up would be complete without the original World Warrior? Ryu returns to the great battle between Marvel and Capcom and brings with him the Hadouken special move that made him such a fearsome adversary in *MVC 2*. It's a genuine screen filler. Anyway, as soon as you see Ryu it's like a stamp of quality that tells you there's some great gaming to be had.

KEY MOVES: Shinkuu Hadouken, Shinkuu Tatumaki Senpuu Kyaku



NAME: Iron Man

AFFILIATION: Marvel

LAST SEEN IN: *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* (PSN)

BIO: Old metal head is the king of the Marvel castle at the moment with money-spinning movies doing well at the box office and Robert Downey Jr kicking off a brand-new wave of interest in the somewhat unstable Tony Stark. As such Iron Man is the focal point of Marvel's presence in *MVC 3* at the moment. It helps that his incarnation in *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* was also superb and probably the best interpretation of the character in a videogame.

KEY MOVES: Proton Cannon



NAME: Hulk

AFFILIATION: Marvel

LAST SEEN IN: *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* (PSN)

BIO: The Incredible Hulk is another staple of this gaming series. His brutish nature and the simplicity of his mind-set seem to be the driving factors behind Hulk's popularity as well as the fact that his alter ego Bruce Banner is the perpetual man on the run because of the gamma radiation that helped create his angrier, greener persona. All told, if you want to pummel someone in *MVC*, you pick Hulk.

KEY MOVES: Gamma Wave, Gamma Crush



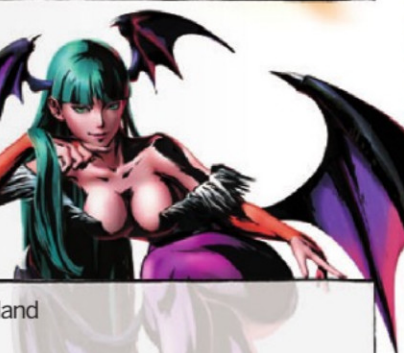
NAME: Morrigan Aensland

AFFILIATION: Capcom

LAST SEEN IN: *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* (PSN)

BIO: Morrigan is one of the most popular characters from the *Darkstalkers* series. She has appeared in pretty much every Capcom crossover game since the first *Marvel Vs Capcom*, making appearances against the cast of SNK and Tatsunoko in recent years. Her popularity is such that she's one of the main reasons people continue to clamour for a *Darkstalkers* sequel. Perhaps this outing could make that happen.

KEY MOVES: Soul Eraser, Silhouette Blade



NAME: Chris Redfield

AFFILIATION: Capcom

LAST SEEN IN: *Resident Evil 5*

BIO: *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* featured Jill Valentine and while we wouldn't necessarily count out the possibility of her returning it was obvious that Redfield would get the initial nod. Hot off the heels of his star turn in *Resident Evil 5*, Redfield has reclaimed his place as the figurehead of the franchise. How his gun-fighting abilities will translate to *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* will be an interesting thing to witness, but we know already that he can throw a punch.

KEY MOVES: Zombie Survival, marksman



NAME: Wolverine

AFFILIATION: Marvel

LAST SEEN IN: *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* (PSN)

BIO: Logan is probably the most popular Marvel character out there. Spider-Man and Iron Man might be giving him a run for his money, but Wolverine is the man. Much like the Hulk it's probably something to do with his animalistic side that makes him so engaging. That and those claws. Kind of hard not to find those immeasurably cool isn't it? Like the Hulk, Wolverine's up-close-and-personal fighting style is always a favourite of beat-'em-up fans.

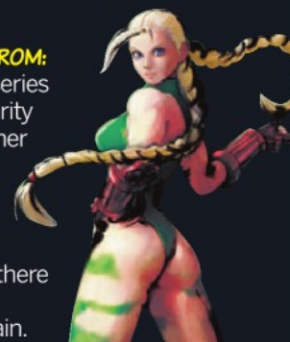
KEY MOVES: Berserker Barrage, Berserker Rage



NEW CHALLENGERS

Play's wish list of MVC stars from the past

NAME: Cammy
BEST KNOWN FROM: *Street Fighter* series
BIO: Her popularity already forced her into the cast of *Street Fighter IV* thanks to fan demand and we expect there to be a similar response again.



NAME: Thor
BEST KNOWN FROM: *The Avengers*
BIO: The son of Odin and founder member of The Avengers has yet to make an appearance in the *MVC* series as a playable character.



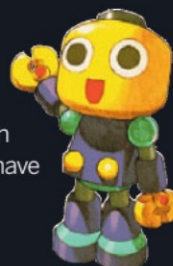
NAME: Spider-Man
BEST KNOWN FROM: *Amazing Spider-Man*
BIO: Peter Parker's entry is pretty obvious, but how about including the Scarlet Spider?

NAME: Psylocke
BEST KNOWN FROM: *X-Men*
BIO: Another fan favourite, but this time from the Marvel side. Psylocke's psionic and telekinetic powers make her a formidable foe.



NAME: Barry Burton
BEST KNOWN FROM: *Resident Evil* series
BIO: We were delighted to see Burton return in the Gold Edition of *Resi 5*, but we still want more Barry time.

NAME: Servbot
BEST KNOWN FROM: *Mega Man* series
BIO: These guys, too often confused for Lego men, have had cameos before, but deserve a proper outing.



5 MORE BANDS THAT DESERVE THEIR OWN ROCKBAND GAME

AFTER THE SUCCESS of the first proper one-band *Rock Band* game, *The Beatles: Rock Band*, Green Day have become the latest band to receive the Harmonix treatment. Cool. But being the impatient, never-satisfied types the **Play** team are, we already want more. Specifically, we think these five huge, iconic artists deserve the sort of love letter to their music and history that The Beatles got...



2 QUEEN

Queen are one of the biggest bands ever, and also one of the most diverse both in their music and their image. We'd love to see their story retold in *Rock Band* form. Just the thought of *playing* that Live Aid show – the greatest live performance of all time – gives us little brightly coloured, plastic goose bumps.

4 THE ROLLING STONES

Most of the best-known Stones stories concern off-stage antics, but that doesn't mean there wouldn't be a wealth of music and landmark moments for Harmonix to draw on. Causing so much excitement on the Ed Sullivan show that they were 'banned', making the rock 'n' roll circus movie, releasing hundreds of white butterflies in tribute to Brian Jones in front of 250,000 fans in Hyde Park – all good stuff.



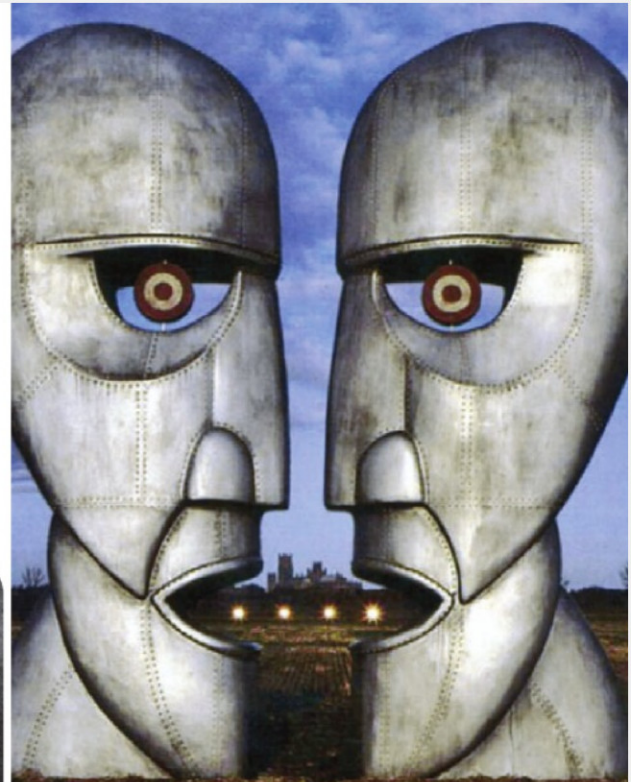
3 LED ZEPPELIN

No band is more perfect for a *Rock Band* game than Led Zeppelin. Last year, Led Zep guitar god Jimmy Page publicly dismissed music games. But in January this year, he seemed to have changed his tune, expressing an understanding of how games can be a stepping-stone to real instruments, how they can help people to learn the timing involved in playing music and how, most importantly, they're fun.



1 ELVIS PRESLEY

No one quite knows who's sold more records out of The Beatles and Elvis. They're about as big as each other basically, and that's way, way bigger than anyone else. Admittedly Elvis isn't technically a band, but who cares? He's the undisputed King Of Rock 'n' Roll so he can be whatever he wants to be, and we're pretty sure he'd want to be celebrated and remembered in *Rock Band* form.



5 PINK FLOYD

Pink Floyd were always pioneers in creating visual spectacle on stage with intense light shows and special effects. But as their fame, audiences and budget grew, the stage shows got more and more elaborate. The giant inflatable pig, the on-stage plane crash and animatronic 'teacher', along with some of the most iconic surrealist album art ever would be perfect fodder for the Harmonix treatment.

TEAM PICKS

The Play team's most wanted *Rock Band* artists



GAVIN

MANOWAR

They're my favourite band, and have just launched a multimedia, epic fantasy project called *The Asgard Saga*, which would work great as an interactive musical story in game form.



IAN

A WILHELM SCREAM

One of the best bands most of you haven't heard of and a perfect addition to the world of *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band* – intense, shredding, melodic hardcore.



JON

THE PIXIES

The great thing about The Pixies is if they were to get their own *Rock Band* game is that they require no talent to sing along to. Mastering those guitar solos on the other hand...



KEITH

KISS

Over almost 40 years Kiss has built up a legion of fans just waiting to slap on the make-up and play the band's back catalogue. It's time to give the Kiss Army what they want!



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RE:PLAY



Opinions are like bottoms (and unlike the PSPgo) – everyone's got one, and you can fit a UMD in it. It nearly makes sense



This month's letters answered by:
Gavin Mackenzie,
Rum baba

In general, we get more letters telling us our scores are too low than letters telling us our scores are too high but we stand by our scoring policy, and don't believe that we're harsh. Put it this way, would you rather take a punt on a game that gets 70-80% and discover you love it? Or buy a game that gets 90% at full price and discover it's really not for you? Surely it's the former. Encouraging our readers to waste their money is the last thing we want to do.

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Bottom Juice

In issue 191's Japanews your nameless writer expressed his opinions on 3D, saying it was cacky pants. Now I don't want to call anyone a jackass but, you sir, are a jackass! 3D is an incredible emerging technology and this kind of misleading and blinkered journalism has no value. The article suggests that 3D is hateful stuff because you have to wear glasses to have any fun and that those crazy people at MGA have implemented a kind of Sixaxis control in the glasses that makes it hard to play the game. I wear glasses and I have fun all the time. I'm having fun right now deriding your opinion. Also, if a games company makes a balls of implementing a control system you don't blame the control system!

Henry Wrightson,
Peterborough

Now now, our man in Japan didn't say 3D was cacky pants, just that he hated it, and he didn't blame *Metal Gear Arcade's* control problems on 3D, rather he cited it as an example of why he hates 3D. He's entitled to do these things because his is an opinion piece, and therefore neither misleading nor blinkered. You wouldn't want an opinion piece written by someone without strong opinions now, would you? Ian would also



Metal Gear Arcade doesn't really work. Trust us on this.

like to point out that he wears glasses and that he has a problem with any technology that requires him to wear an additional pair. Didn't think of that, did you?

Tom Wats(going)on?

Hello **Play**, hope you are well. Not so much a letter of complaint just a pointer that in issue 191 in the F.A.Q. section of RE:Play, my letter was printed about how I smashed stuff because of a CG helicopter. Just to let you know I am not the MP or the golfer, just a boy of 14 living in Stowmarket. So just to say I am no one of great importance.

Tom Watson, Stowmarket

I'm not sure if this is supposed to be funny or not, but either way, it certainly is. Thanks for letting us know, Tom, although I didn't really think you were the MP or the golfer – I was just having a laugh. But by making me laugh you have become someone of great importance. Such great importance that you have earned yourself a free PS3 game. Unfortunately, I can't send it to you because you're not 15. But I can send it to one of your parents if you get them to contact us. Or I could send it to Tom Watson the MP. He'd love that.

PSP No-go

I'd like to write about the PSPgo. On release day I rushed to HMV early hoping they hadn't sold out. But to my amazement they had loads. Was I the only one looking forward to it? I was happy and I've enjoyed it, but what I can't understand is the money and the time Sony must have invested in this handheld and it just seems to have

passed everyone by. I never see any adverts for it. My local game shops have rows and rows of the original PSP with games, but next to nothing with the PSPgo. Is this the result of only being downloadable? I can't just nip and buy a game when I'm shopping or if anyone wants to get you a game as a present they've got nothing to give, only a voucher for the PSN.

Back to my point, the PSPgo just seems to have come and gone and no one is really interested in it. Sony must think about making games on hard copies for it. As far as I can see when you see any images of anything to do with the PSP everyone still shows the old PSP and not the PSPgo. Is the original PSP superior? The PSPgo is good but not much better than the old one, and that's been its downfall. Is downloadable really too much for people on its own at the moment? We need hard copies and we need them now. In a few years from now people will say, 'remember the PSPgo'? And they'll say, 'no, when was that out?' But the PSP, oh yes I remember that.

Neil Dethridge, Bar Hill

Neil, never have we encountered someone so inarticulate yet so insightful. Making your letters – with their excessive use of uppercase letters

and patchy punctuation – readable is both challenging and time-consuming. But underneath the mess, we always find worthwhile points being made. No offence or nuffink, it's just weird is all.

But yeah, the PSPgo has been a bit of a damp squib, and we think you've picked out all of the main reasons why, bar the most important one – it launched at £250, which is a crazy price for hardware that, on the inside, is several years old. Hopefully Sony has learned some lessons about consumers liking options and retailers liking some incentive to promote hardware. Oh, and we *still* love your name.



Yeah but... it tells the time.

Yet another Tom Watson, this chap was the manager of Liverpool FC between 1896 and 1915.





Write in, and win! Every full-length letter we print receives a free game, courtesy of THQ. For each letter we included this month, the sender wins a copy of UFC Undisputed 2010, which is available now for the PS3 (£49.99).

STUPID letter

Card Carrying Addict



Trading card games are addictive in a bad way. Fact!

Just love your magazine... but simply had to respond to a certain review!!

No need... no need... no need...

I have been a passive reader of your blessed magazine for many a year but simply had to write to you after reading your review of *The Eye Of Judgment: Legends* on PSP.

First, the good bits. Thanks for at least reviewing our beloved game (bad publicity is better than no publicity right?), as I can barely find a mention of it anywhere else. Also, your comparison between an *EOJ*er and a hardcore drug addict is spot-on. I have spent the last two years in a state of euphoria while playing this game, spending well over £500 (mainly on its PS3 predecessor) and dread to think what's going to happen to me when it all ends.

Nevertheless, saying a game like *Eye Of Judgment* is overcomplicated is like saying *MW2* has too many gun options. Yes, at first there is a bit to get your head around, but once you settle in, you will find a beautiful strategy game that you will simply fall in love with. It is a combination of chess and Magic: The Gathering rolled into one. The online modes are what it's all about. This is a highly addictive and wondrous creation.
Darren Rickard, via email

It's not like saying *Modern Warfare 2* has too many guns because, while each gun has its own properties and stats, you don't need to understand them in order to use it. You basically just need to try each one out and figure out what works best for you through practice. So your analogy fails.

But my analogy between trading cards and hard drugs, as even you admit, is right on the money. Literally.

£500? Five? Hundred? Pounds? Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I rest my case.

F.A.Q.

I have been on holiday for a while now and have just been told that Xbox have got the *MW2* map pack before us. Please tell me why.
Gary Macpherson, via email
Either Microsoft paid Activision for the privilege or they're just really good friends.

Do you think your mag is suitable for kids?

Michael (age 11), via email

For someone of your age, it's borderline. We'd recommend that your parents vet it first.

Sorry for my bad English.

Mark Winkler, Hungary

Mennyivel jobb mint a mi Magyar.

Is there a 'safe' amount of time games can be played before power bars and other in-game icons become screenburned into your TV screen?

Aaron Kellett, Gosport

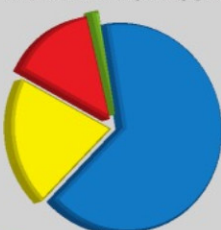
Not really. It doesn't really work like that, and it would mostly depend on your TV anyway.

I've never played any of the *GOW* series... I am so very sorry.

Chris Dakers, via email

Don't be. Kratos has never seen *Star Wars*.

THIS MONTH, YOU'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...



- The future of everything **65%**
- Play's scoring system **20%**
- Politics **14%**
- PSPgo **1%**

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the forum...



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SUBJECT: PLAY MAGAZINE DISCUSSION

Topic: Modern Warfare 2

Starting to like *Modern Warfare 2* again. It's mostly a hate/hate thing, but getting several killstreaks is kinda fun. The best lure for me is when you reach the last few levels of a prestige, and the first few levels.
the bossman

SUBJECT: HEADLINES

Topic: PlayStation 3 vs Xbox 360

I personally think that the PS3 is better but let's not start a huge argument, therefore, no one post in this thread.
UberCool_UberGoff

SUBJECT: PLAY RETRO

Topic: 3D Dot Game Heroes bringing sexy back

I'll be making a penisaurus rex when I get this.
hazy89

Single-handed

I've never noticed anyone bring this up on your pages, but is there such thing as a one-handed PS3 pad? And if not, why? Last year I had a nasty accident playing football and mashed up my hand pretty bad. A year on and I'm finally able to use my hands together but during that time I've been unable to play 99 per cent of most games. In PSone days I remember the one-handed pads released by ASCII. Not great, but at least a small ray of hope for those with problems using both hands. But after searching everywhere, I came up empty-handed (literally). In these times where we're led to believe every gamer is catered for, why are those with disabilities still not looked after? If you ask me it feels like a missed opportunity for gamers and companies alike. Luckily, my year of hell (no videogames) is nearly over, but for others with more permanent injuries I do hope this is rectified so that gamers of all ages, races and capabilities are able to enjoy some of the increasingly marvellous games that are headed to our consoles.

Rob Fox, via email

First of all, Rob sent in a couple of pictures of his hand, but we decided they were too gory to print. If you really want



Maybe if Zakhiev had been able to play PS3, he wouldn't have tried to destroy the world.

to see, then we've posted them on the Play blog (www.play-mag.co.uk/general/single-handed), but they are not for the faint of heart.

Apart from that, I'm glad to hear you've made enough of a recovery to start gaming again, Rob, and I reckon you make a good point. But then, as you say, a few companies have tried to market one-handed controllers before and I can only assume that the reason they don't any more is that they've struggled to make any money from them. Product development costs must be quite high, as I'd imagine a lot of very specialised testing is required, and the demand, in terms of numbers, is pretty low. It ain't fair, but that's just how business works.

The BURNING issues

The stuff we want to hear about!



- Have you ever had to stage an intervention for a friend who was hooked on a terrible game?
- Should opinions on games be forbidden if they're different to yours?
- Do you have the same name as an MP or a golfer?

Castlevania

- Lords of Shadow -

Lords Of Shadow is Castlevania's most radical reboot since Symphony Of The Night – we had a look at the game and chatted with Konami to see if it can live up to the expectations of the series' rabid fans

A series that began before many of our readers were born, all the way back in 1986. A man with a whip. Vampires. Anyone familiar with what we're talking about must have at some point played a *Castlevania* game – maybe *Symphony Of The Night*, 1997's PSone re-imagining of the series which has since been held in such high regard; maybe you had a pop on *The Dracula X Chronicles* on PSP; or maybe you've been a devout player since the very inception of the series, and are therefore as old as we are. However you've encountered the series – and even if you haven't – it's safe to say there's a lot of history that comes with a new *Castlevania* game. And when the developer says it wants to do something new, to take the series in a new direction – as MercurySteam is with *Lords Of Shadow* – the fans are always likely to be up in arms. We went to have an exclusive look at the game to see how things are turning out, as well as having a chat with Dave Cox, head of product planning at Konami and producer on *Lords Of Shadow*. Do the committed fans have anything to worry

about? And what's being done to welcome those new to the series into the fold?

Cox was undaunted, "Originally there was a lot of worry and concern at Konami that we might alienate a lot of fans, but I think a lot of that is unfounded because most of the fans are up for it and they like what we're doing." He went on, "There's a few that would just love to have the game in 2D and continue the way it was but we can't continue from a financial standpoint to do that.

Some people aren't going to like it but what we're trying to do is bring the fans with us

Fair enough, some people aren't going to like what we're doing and we accept that but generally what we're trying to do is bring the fans with us."

What we saw of the game definitely had a *Castlevania* feel to it. While we probably wouldn't have known it was a game in the series were it not for the fact we *already* knew, there is something unmistakable about a man

with a whip fighting monsters. This is something Cox was keen to point out, "On the design document, on the first page, it says 'lone warrior battles supernatural creatures – with a whip'. That was the first thing we had down and we've always kept true to that." Other than that it's a good-looking third-person action platformer that looks set to revitalise a classic series – one which hasn't seen a major console release since 2006's *Curse Of Darkness* on PS2 (ignoring the Wii's *Judgment*).

It takes the series in a violent direction that has always been alluded to, but never really embraced. Blood sprays, chopped up limbs are dragged across the floor and it really is rather dark – everyone involved is keen to stress the game is 'mature', however, and that it avoids the ridiculous excesses of many other 'grown up' games (which invariably end up being massive swear-a-thons with liberal sprinklings of nudity). We've been promised melancholy, a story that affects the player and an ending that will shock, but until we see the finished product it's going to be hard to gauge where exactly this *Castlevania* brand of 'mature' is coming from. ➤

Castlevanias through PlayStation history Where have we come from to be where we are today?



1997 Symphony Of The Night

A genuine PSone classic and the game that reset the template for future *Castlevanias*. Re-released on the US PSN in 2007.



2001 Castlevania Chronicles

A remake of the original *Castlevania*, released on PSone and re-released on US PSN in 2008.



2004 Castlevania

Subtitled *Lament Of Innocence* in the US, this PS2 release aped *Devil May Cry* and picked up a score of 71% from **Play**.



2006 Curse Of Darkness

This PS2 game decided not to include a whip for the main character. Possibly the stupidest decision in the history of the series.



2006 Haunted Castle

This game was originally released in arcades way back in 1988, it received a Japan-only re-release on PlayStation 2.



2007 The Dracula X Chronicles

A remake and compilation of *Rondo Of Blood* and *Symphony Of The Night*, released on PSP.



LORDS OF SHADOW

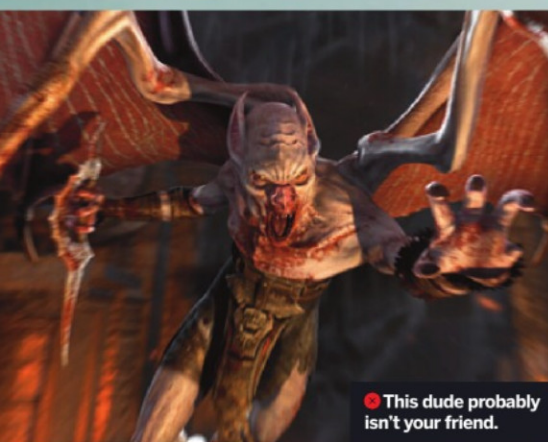




● These guys probably need a different strategy to the usual 'stab in heart, win'.



● Balancing. No vampires in sight. A good day.



● This dude probably isn't your friend.

The unseen titan

How can we not see them?
They're MASSIVE



ONE ELEMENT OF *Lords Of Shadow* that we haven't seen much of is the titan battles. These huge-scale fights take a few volumes out of *Shadow Of The Colossus's* library, as we have mentioned before, and look to be some of the most visually arresting parts of the game. Why Konami isn't keen to show off more of these scenes – arguably the most talked about and interesting parts of the game shown so far – we're not really sure. Obviously they don't want to ruin the surprises of who we'll be facing in the game, but at the same time we just want to see more titans.



● Combat is as you would expect – fast flowing and simple.

➤ One thing that is certain is that this is nothing like the games in the series that have come before – there have been 3D efforts, mind you, but they've never been anything more than decent at best. With a mixed pedigree when it comes to the series with an extra dimension, were MercurySteam, Konami or anyone else worried it would be a bit of a risk? "When we first took on the project there was a worry, a concern of 'could we pull this off?'," Cox admitted. "But I think in order for this game to appeal to a mainstream audience – which it was initially designed for – it needs to be in 3D. I think the problem with *Castlevania* is that it used to be a main pillar title for Konami, one of the big franchises, and over the years it's just appealed to a very small core audience of fans by sticking to its 2D roots. The brief from Japan when we originally were asked to pitch for the game was 'we want to broaden the appeal, we want to make it popular with Western audiences and make it a more mainstream game'. We needed to do that in 3D." On he went, "We wanted to initially remake the 8-bit game but it's already been done before and with all the history of *Castlevania* and all the plot details and characters in it we thought a lot of new players wouldn't be able to jump straight in – they're not going to know what's going on. So we decided to reboot the story and reboot the game visually from a more modern perspective, so that's what we've done. Whether we succeed or not is for others to judge."

The word 'reboot' popped up a lot during our chat with Cox, which prompted the question: why are there so many reboots, re-imaginings and remakes these days? Have we simply run out of new ideas? "I don't think it's a question of running out of ideas, I think the issue is that the people playing games now have probably never played a *Castlevania* game. I've grown up with *Castlevania* so I've known it all my life, but a lot of people don't know what *Castlevania* is... I think in order to bring in new audiences you need to reinvent franchises, especially franchises that have been going such a long time – *Castlevania's* been going about 25 years now and you need to keep it fresh and appealing to today's audience. You can't keep making the same game over and over again." He added another interesting influence to the pile, in the shape of a popular sci-fi film, "It's like that with movies – I think what JJ Abrams did with *Star Trek* was fantastic. He kept the fan things in there but he really reinvented it and in a way that's an inspiration for us – that's kind of where we came from." But Cox was quick to bring it back to gaming, and personal experience in particular, "When I joined Konami

in 1997 one of the first games I worked on was *Symphony Of The Night* and that was quite a radical change from what had gone before. There was a lot of doubt and worry within the company that people wouldn't accept this – which they did, luckily. So *Castlevania* has already reinvented itself once and in many ways this is something new, we're doing a similar thing to what they did with *Symphony Of The Night* which is evolving the franchise."

It's obvious that *Lords Of Shadow* takes many cues from past *Castlevania* games – it would be odd if it didn't – but there are definite, undeniable nods here and there to other great series. Lead character Gabriel's jumping, clinging and swinging is straight out of Nathan Drake's play-book, it's hard to see the combat in action and not think of Kratos and – by

Lords Of Shadow takes many cues from past Castlevania games

extension – Dante of *Inferno* fame pops into your head. As Cox explained, "People are going to say the inevitable *God Of War* and *Dante's Inferno* and *Uncharted* and that kind of thing – of course we're influenced by those games, we play them and think 'oh, that's got some cool ideas' but we haven't set out to make a *God Of War*-style game, it's not really very similar." But the main influence may come as a shock, "Probably one of the biggest influences has been *Street Fighter* – I'm a huge *Street Fighter* fan and I wanted to have the combat in the game to be full of depth and full of strategy with lots of blocking and dodging and fighting and counter-attacking. I didn't want to just have walking around, whipping loads of enemies and then moving onto the next room. I wanted it so the player has to think, has to play well – so hopefully we've achieved that with the game. We've made combat quite deep, so sure you can bash the buttons but you're going to die quite quickly. You really need to think about what you're doing. So I'm quite proud of that aspect."

A mixture of combat, puzzles, platforming and battling gigantic enemies (à la *Shadow Of The Colossus*) does come across like a fine combination of elements and it's one we're keen to play through. If MercurySteam is capable of combining the addictive RPG elements of earlier *Castlevania* games with a robust combat system, platforming that is functional, flowing and fun, puzzles that tickle the grey matter and some satisfyingly massive bosses it's hard to see how they can go wrong. Even if the story, the setting or any other background element were to go wrong, a solid foundation of good mechanics could still make the game one to watch out for. From what we've seen so far, platforming looked perfectly functional and combat seems to be a mix



• We do wonder if Gabriel tires of stabbing vampires at any point.

of *God Of War's* immediacy with some nice tactical nuances; but we weren't privy to enough of the puzzle sections to make a judgement on just how complex they are going be or from which franchise it take its cues. The visuals though do deserve a mention as for a game still in progress it's extremely polished already and as development is leading on PS3 it should only get better. For the sheer amount of effort that's going into the game, we can't help but be hopeful for the future of this game – and with a committed developer backed up by Hideo Kojima and his Kojima Productions team, you know *Castlevania* is treading more on the precipice of success rather than damnation.

But what effect has Kojima's involvement with the game actually had? "Kojima's role is more of an advisory one," Cox admits, "so he's overseeing the project from afar... so it's only really advice. But you'd be a fool to ignore advice from someone like Hideo Kojima... Also just having his name attached to the project gives us visibility that we wouldn't have got otherwise. I don't think there's anything wrong with that – it wasn't done in a cynical way. I worked with him on *Metal Gear Solid* back in the day – he knows me and he knows the struggles we've got to get this project off the ground internally. So he offered us a helping hand." As for Kojima Productions, "They've helped us, we've had certain issues during development that you normally get, so we've had team members from Kojima Productions over to Spain to work with the team, on animation, facials and things like that." It certainly seems to be a symbiotic relationship between the developers, and the years of experience Kojima and his team bring to the relationship is something that cannot be overlooked. But if you think this is an out and out collaborative effort, you'd be mistaken – aside from the Kojima Productions involvement, there has been no outside help, not even from those involved in earlier *Castlevania* titles. As Cox explained, "We deliberately kept away from what's happened before, because we wanted to do our own

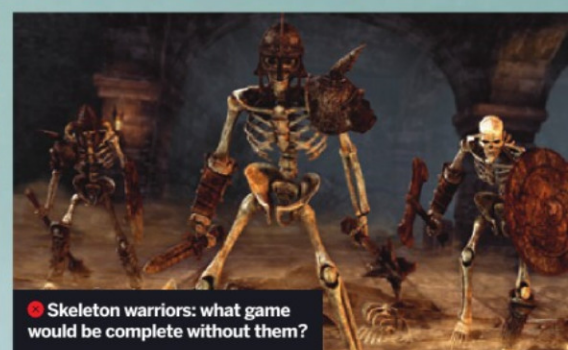
Our pitch was to do a realistic, gritty, adult Castlevania game

thing. Our pitch was to do a realistic, gritty, adult, Western-style *Castlevania* game... there's no point in going back and making the same game again – the point is to make a clean break and move forward with the series. In order to do that we needed to cut those ties and move forward on our own."

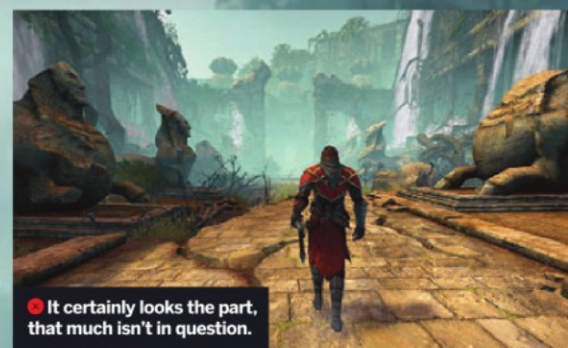
Where MercurySteam is hoping the game will transcend its standard, third-person action trappings is through the 'mature,' 'gritty' storyline and the involvement of A-list voice talent like Robert Carlyle, Patrick Stewart and Jason Isaacs. According to Cox, it wasn't much of an effort to get the talent involved, "It was [easy]. Some of them were very keen – Jason Isaacs for example was dead keen to get involved. He's been brilliant. They've all been brilliant." But why involve such talent in a game like *Castlevania*? "Originally when we came up with the storyline we knew that it was quite an emotional, deep, intense, melancholy type of game and we thought the only way to deliver the wallop we wanted to deliver at the end of the game, we needed somebody to deliver it with gravitas and we needed actors who could pull it off.

"It's brought something extra to the story and to the game which I think will really please people. I think this game isn't very bombastic – it's got a lot more depth to it. The story's got a lot of depth to it, it's a believable story, the characters are believable characters – so when you see them in these fantastic situations, going through this turmoil and all the things that we're going to throw at them I think you need someone like Robert or Patrick to pull them off."

The ball is very much in MercurySteam's court right now. The developer's last game, *Clive Barker's Jericho*, was a fairly good statement of intent (84% in **Play** 159) so we have some confidence in the team to deliver an engaging experience, a confidence that seems to be shared by Cox himself, "I think they would like to be known as the developer that developed *Castlevania*, not the developer that developed *Jericho*. I think – hopefully – they'll prove themselves with this one, it's the next step in their evolution."



• Skeleton warriors: what game would be complete without them?



• It certainly looks the part, that much isn't in question.

Meanwhile...

Play this while you wait



THERE'S STILL A bit of a wait before we can all get our hands on *Castlevania's* reboot, but that's not to say we can't immerse

ourselves in earlier entries to the series. The PlayStation is home to one of the finest entries in the series' history in the shape of *Symphony Of The Night*, which still holds up well to this day. Rather than forking out the still-quite-high prices on eBay for a used copy, you can instead download it on the PSN for a more reasonable price. The only problem is it's only available on the US store. Or you can pick up *The Dracula X Chronicles* on PSP, in which the game is included. Go forth and play.

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PREVIEW

The games that define the future of PlayStation



SACKFATHER

Francis Pang, artist and father of Sackboy



Sackboy's a blank canvas by nature, but he has his own traits. What would you say is the essence of Sackboy?

The hardest task was to make a design that would work, that could do all the things that you needed him to do in the game and still be attractive to the player. I've been surprised several times by how versatile he is. I'm amazed how well some of these IP costumes have been working out for him.

So whether he's dressed as Jack Sparrow or Chun-Li or whoever, what does he give to that? What's his own appeal?

I think it's lots of little things. I spent a lot of time at Disney doing internships, and they have quite an exact science of what appeal is. They try to boil it down to specific shapes, arrangements and proportions. Having learnt that, some of that probably transferred into his design. There's also a kind of emo feel to him. The fact that he's made of a material that's a bit aged, his eyes are a bit wonky, he's not properly symmetrical, there's that imperfection to him that's also quite appealing. There's a sense that he's existed before you met him, and he's an old toy.

Do you ever get home after a long day and make stuff out of cardboard?

Not any more now I've got a daughter... although maybe I should do. Definitely that vibe was the inspiration of the game. I should do that more. Thanks for that.

Does your daughter know Sackboy?

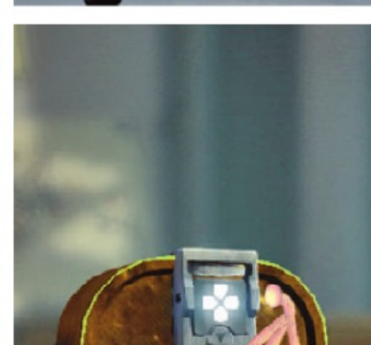
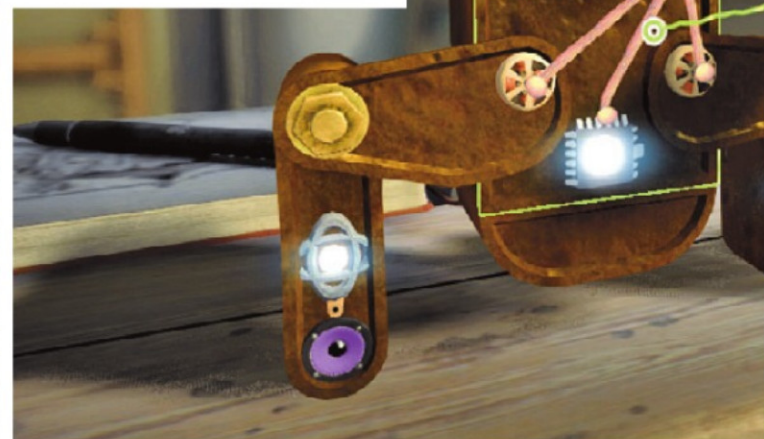
She recognises him. She'll say Sackboy when she sees him. I've made sure of that. "You must recognise your brother!"

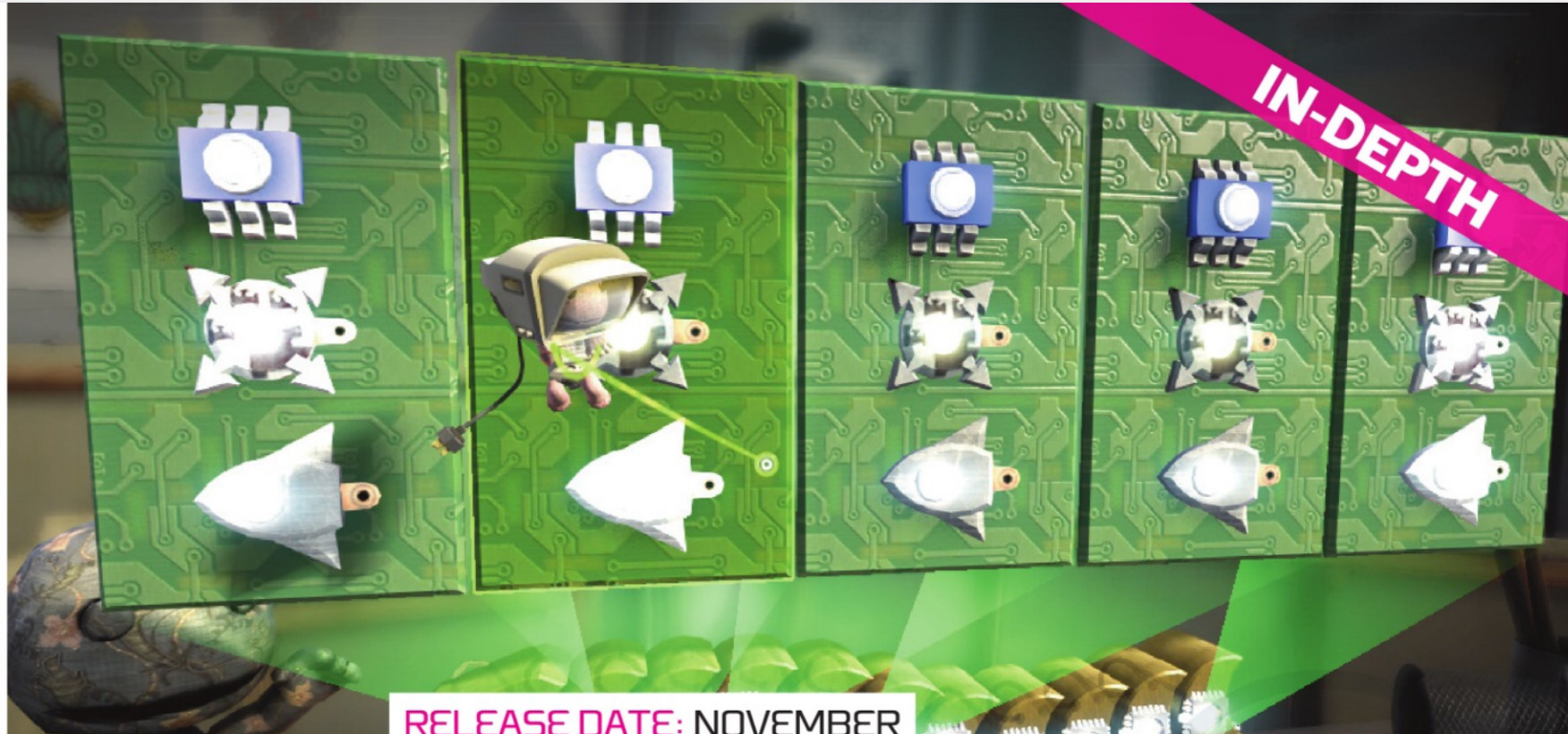


You can even make your own music videos, complete with sexy dancers like these.



This is a from-scratch vehicle capable of climbing over obstacles with some of its workings showing.





RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

LittleBigPlanet 2

There's no 'Little' about it any more

Media Molecule's Alex Evans begins his presentation on *LittleBigPlanet 2* by recalling, with real pride, how journalists had responded to the first reveal of the original game by 'complaining' that it was impossible to write a piece about a game with such mind-boggling potential. He goes on to outline the team's hope that journalists will have exactly the same problem this time, too. It's more than a hope, really. It's an expectation, a confident one, and one fulfilled and then exceeded by the end of our day in the company of Media Molecule and *LBP 2*. We've got another 1,500 words to write here and we have no idea how to begin, how to end or what to put in the middle. It's already too much for our feeble brains to comprehend and we get the horrible yet wonderful feeling that Media Molecule has only really scratched the surface so far.

We even asked Kareem Ettouney, art director and co-founder of Media Molecule, how he'd go about writing a preview of *LittleBigPlanet 2* if he were in our shoes and he went off on one like you wouldn't believe, giving an answer with an abundance of passion, conviction and belief, but almost no coherence, structure or focus. It was like asking a child to describe how big the universe is. Fellow co-founder Mark Healey had similar difficulties in trying to sum up his hopes and expectations for Sackboy's second outing, pretty much giving up halfway through a sentence, leaning back in his chair with his head in his hands and sighing, "I just can't wait, man..."

So if even the guys making it can't sum up *LittleBigPlanet 2* in some kind of orderly way, what hope do we have? Probably none, but we'll try. Put it this way, we saw more than enough of the game in one day to make us literally dizzy at the thought of what might be possible, and were promised that there are plenty more unfinished details still to be revealed and that more features and content will be added after release, just as they were with the original. So all we can do is try to cram as many of the details we now know into these four pages and not worry too much about arriving at some sort of conclusion because by the time you get to the end of this piece you'll probably be too drooling and cross-eyed to notice anyway.

Let's start with what Media Molecule's staff describe as the

not necessarily something obvious at all. The potential applications are vast. But let's say, for example, the seat is both attached and wired to a vehicle. Sackboy can now drive that vehicle without needing to clumsily grab spongy things and pull levers like he used to. That in itself is pretty cool, but think a little deeper about the implications and you realise that if Sackboy needn't be visible in the seat and the seat needn't even be physically attached to whatever it is it controls, then what this means is you can effectively have entire levels where the main playable character – or playable... thing – isn't Sackboy. Not just levels, entire games. Oh yes, you can link your levels together properly so that they work as full-sized games in *LBP 2*. Just think about it, but don't think about it too hard, you'll do yourself a mischief.

We saw more than enough to make us literally dizzy at the thought of what might be possible

'hottest thing' in the whole game, the thing that they believe will justify the release of a sequel by itself. Oh yes, it's the Sixaxis Direct Control Seat. The name will change as soon as someone thinks of something better, but the functionality will stay pretty much just as we saw it. The seat is a little square with a picture of a D-pad on it that Sackboy can flip down and pop himself onto. Once in position he will have direct control of whatever it is the seat is wired up to – most obviously a vehicle but, as with everything in *LBP*,

The Direct Control Seat works using a special variant of the new chip system, which is set to play a very important part in shaping how the most advanced creators do their stuff. Our heads are starting to hurt from thinking about it, but we'll persevere. Okay, remember how switches and sensors had to be placed on the physical environment in the first *LBP*? And how that could get very cluttered and confusing? Well, now you can put your switches and sensors onto a circuit board, which can in theory



PREVIEW



be as big as an entire level and can be condensed down to about the same size as a single switch – a microchip. This chip is then used like any other switch or sensor, only with the functions of many. It can even be put onto another circuit board within another chip. Oh dear God. Anyway, the special chip that exists in every Direct Control Seat is a preset example of one of these circuit boards. A switch representing every function of the PS3 controller is mapped onto it and each of these functions can be wired to an object, and a corresponding action specified. But in normal chips, actions don't need to be wired to functions of the controller, they can be wired to a huge range of parameters and conditions to the point where you can even start programming complex AI routines.

There are loads more types of sensors beyond those that detect the proximity of Sackboy or of a specific Key and there are loads more types of action, way

together with playable entities and control systems that can also be designed from scratch and you should start getting a sense of how enormous the possibilities are. Makes you go, "Er... um... so... whu... ca... huh... blschdblpgruh," doesn't it?

Now, if all this sounds very complicated, that's because it is, but even if you don't get to that advanced level of Creation yourself, it's worth knowing that some people can and will do incredible things with all these new possibilities. And the cool thing is that even those of us not smart enough or dedicated enough to design our own chips can still create NPCs with simple AI behaviour thanks to the introduction of Sackbots. A Sackbot is essentially a clone of Sackboy that isn't controlled by the player, at least not directly. They're easier for Creators to use than characters made from scratch because their form and many of their actions are pre-made, but they're still extremely versatile. In one of the Story

levels we played, there were seven mini Sackbots that needed to be rescued from a factory. They

essentially had two actions. One was to follow Sackboy, the other was to get sucked up a pipe whenever they walked under one. They were smart enough to jump over obstacles and switch paths where necessary without that needing to be manually programmed in, which goes to show how easy they are for Creators to work with. A few different settings and they can be used as enemies, and you can even wire one up to a Direct Control Seat and have Sackboy operate a Sackbot using the default Sackboy controls. We were shown an example of how Sackboy could use a bigger, stronger Sackbot to move objects too heavy for him to drag

himself. All this can be done without using custom-built chips, but you can program Sackbots with chips if you want. Media Molecule even reckons it might be possible to program a Sackbot capable of completing any level automatically. Whuh!? Yeah, we know, but that's what was said.

So, that's the mind-bogglingly awesome stuff covered, which hopefully leaves us enough space to go over various other, mostly self-explanatory details before we finally collapse in a puddle of our own brain goo. Ready? Go...

The whole game looks a touch better, and that includes *LittleBigPlanet 2* levels running in *LittleBigPlanet 2*. The difference isn't huge, but everything looks a bit deeper thanks to some improved shadowing. The Share side of things has been massively improved thanks to an improved in-game interface as well as integration with Facebook, Twitter, mobile phones, QR Codes and a unified *LBP* website that allows you to queue up, and even launch, levels from your PC, as well as a whole host of community features. Basically, it's less likely you'll spend a fortnight on a level only for just eight people to ever play it. There are loads of new tools along the lines of the paint gun and the jetpack. We tried out the grapple arm, which was loads of fun, and saw the power glove, which made Sackboy stronger and able to throw things. Also, you can now create cut-scenes and even entirely non-interactive movies should you so wish. So this means *LittleBigPlanet 2* isn't just for creating platform games... it's not even just for creating games... it's for creating movies and... and... and... oh, we just can't wait...

LittleBigPlanet 2 is being developed first by Media Molecule, then by you and us and everyone else. Look see here: www.mediamolecule.com

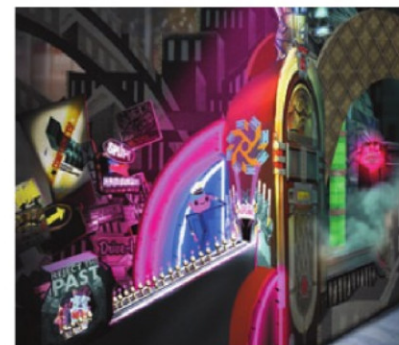


CREATIVE PEAKS

The themes of LBP 2's new story



THE NEW MEDIA Molecule-made story takes place across six themed worlds, each meant to represent periods in history when human creativity hit peaks. First there's Da Vinci's Hideout (above), which blends the Renaissance with techno. Then Victoria's Lab, in which steampunk meets cake, yes... cake. Next, The Factory (below), where Fifties neon collides with Fifties propaganda. Moving on to Avalonia, we have both hi-tech stuff and fluffy stuff. The penultimate theme is Eve's Asylum where there's an unlikely fusion between Art Nouveau design and the organic greenness of the Eden Project. Finally, our favourite is The Cosmos where hand-made craft meets retro gaming and falls in love and lives happily ever after. We wish we had some screens of it, it really is smashing.



Just think about it, but don't think about it too hard, you'll do yourself a mischief

beyond the simple on/off mechanics of the first game. For example, any object can now move independently of gravity or of any mechanism. Winches and bolts and pistons and that kind of thing are still there if Creators want to use them, but to make things simpler a platform can be made to move up and down or a wheel go 'round and 'round because it is specified to do so and not necessarily because physics makes it happen. What all this means is that advanced Creators will be able to make characters and creatures entirely from scratch and give them their own tailor-made intelligent, responsive, adaptive behavioural patterns. Put that

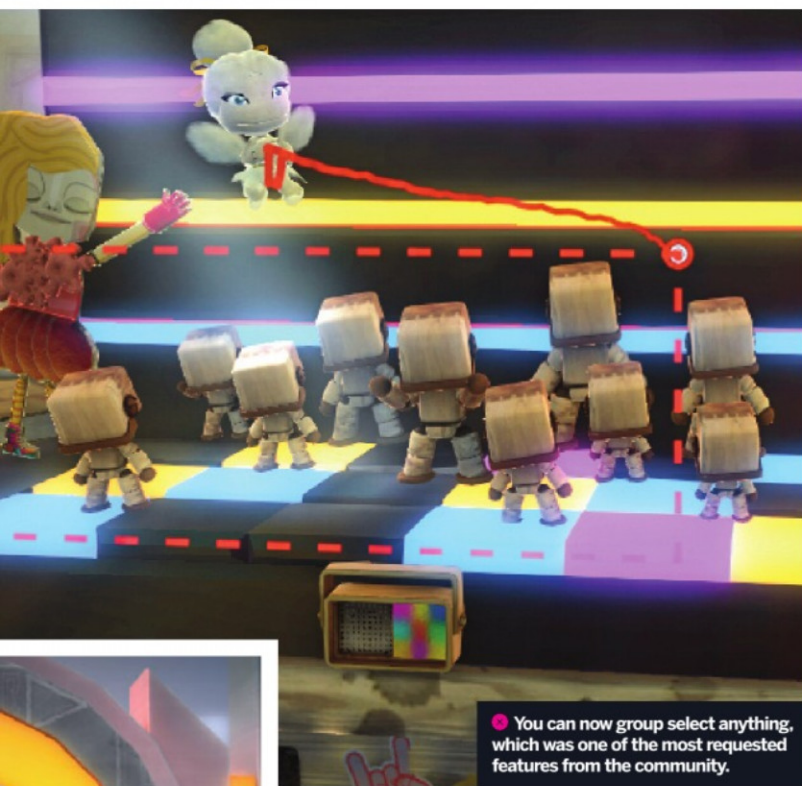
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ A vastly improved version of an already fantastic game/platform.
- ❑ Still stands out as truly the only game of its kind currently on the market.

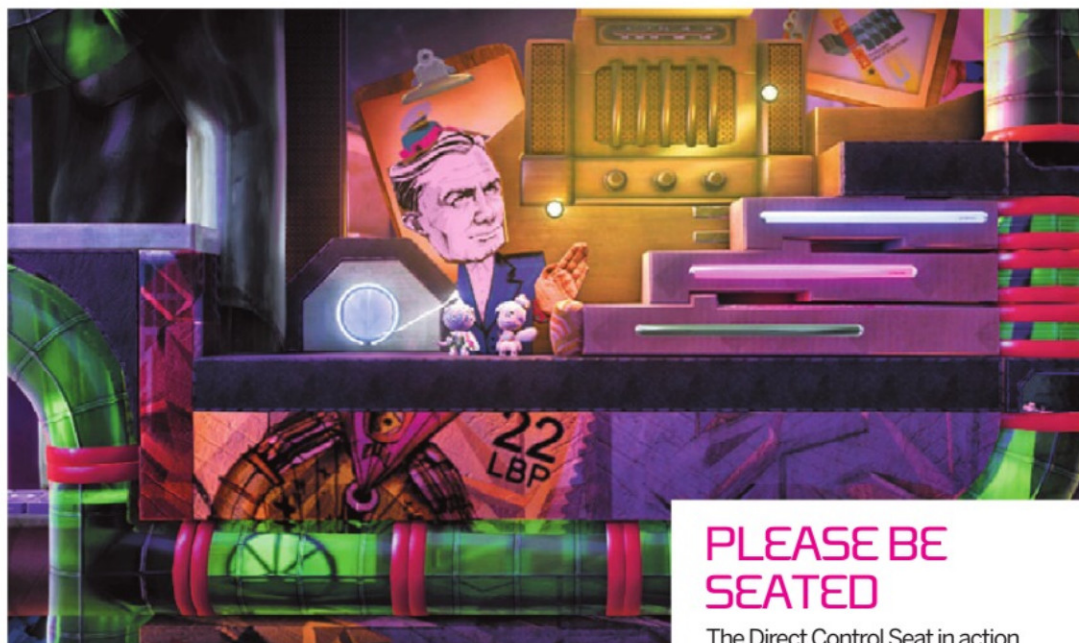
- ❑ So versatile, we can't even imagine what might be possible in this new version.
- ❑ The concept is now a proven success, so we can't see what could go wrong.

READ ME

One of the testers at Media Molecule has created his own creative tools using *LBP 2*'s creative tools. This makes our brains cry.



● You can now group select anything, which was one of the most requested features from the community.



PLEASE BE SEATED

The Direct Control Seat in action

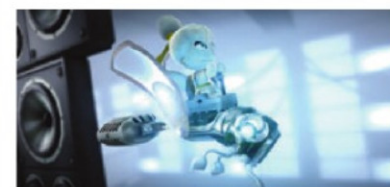
We play through a vehicle demo level (that won't be in the game) to give us an idea of some uses for the Direct Control Seat. They've really gotta change that name.



● We doubt grabbing other players with the grapple glove will ever, ever stop being funny.



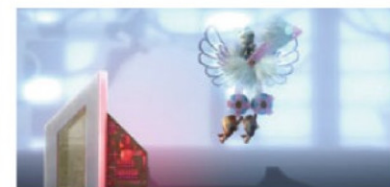
Sackboy is hidden when he rides the furry fella, effectively making the cat/dog into a playable character. The Sackbot can drag larger blocks, helping Sackboy to progress.



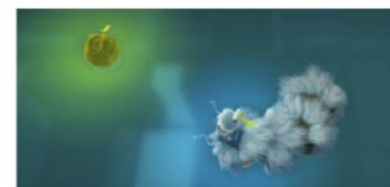
This vehicle works like a 2D shoot-'em-up ship. First of all, we tackled a side-scrolling section. It was like *R-Type* only way cuter and nowhere near as hard.



Then it suddenly went all *Space Invaders*. We were having too much fun too figure out how it was done, but needless to say the camera positioning is very flexible now.



Next we got to ride this bird to rescue Sackbots, except we were a bit clumsy and both the birds feet fell off. It was actually a lot easier to control than we made it look.



It's difficult to make out, but this is Sackboy riding a caterpillar viewed from above. When we did it, we were racing against some other AI-controlled caterpillars.



● Sackbots can be made any size and can use any of Sackboy's costume options.



PREVIEW



The dynamic lighting effects are excellent.

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Call Of Duty: Black Ops

Not everything is so black and white

We weren't kind to the last two Treyarch *Call Of Duty* games, but we weren't harsh either, despite what we were accused of. They got the scores they deserved. *Call Of Duty 3* just wasn't that good, and *World At War*... well, we refuse to applaud any game that takes such sadistic pleasure in wilfully misrepresenting and exploiting one of the greatest tragedies in human history. And anyone that does so has no grounds to complain about games being marginalised by the mainstream. We have to earn the right to be taken seriously, and games like *World At War* don't help.

So... we approach *Call Of Duty: Black Ops* like a schoolboy who's had a fight with another schoolboy and been told to go and apologise. We're not *really* sorry, but we realise we ought to patch things up and give him another chance.

First we shall address that most controversial of issues: taste. Excess, sadism and gore we have no problem with at all, but in the context of a game that professes to be historically accurate, relevant even, it's embarrassing. *Black Ops* has the excess, sadism and gore boxes well ticked. You get a shotgun loaded with incendiary shells that blows a hole in your adversary and

sets him on fire – that's excess covered. There's a bit where a squad of NVA (North Vietnamese Army) all get cut in half by the blades of a stricken helicopter – our survey says 'Gore'. And there are numerous opportunities to stab people in the neck, even while they sleep. Sadistic? Sounds it. All probably quite entertaining, too.

Now, were *Black Ops* purporting to be an accurate retelling of a devastating war that lasted 20 years and resulted in the deaths of nearly 6 million people, all this bloodthirsty fun and games might not sit too comfortably, but from what we've seen so far it's not. Yes, it is set during various real-life Cold War conflicts including, but not exclusively, the Vietnam War, but Treyarch has its own, possibly quite off-the-wall story to tell and so far isn't pretending that it has anything much to do with what really happened. So that's fine. Although if we see any archive footage of screaming peasants fleeing freshly napalmed villages to a nu-metal soundtrack in the final game, there might be an issue.

The exact nature of Treyarch's story isn't clear yet, but you'll be playing as various deniable-ops elites in various parts of the world, all of whom are involved in operations that aren't officially

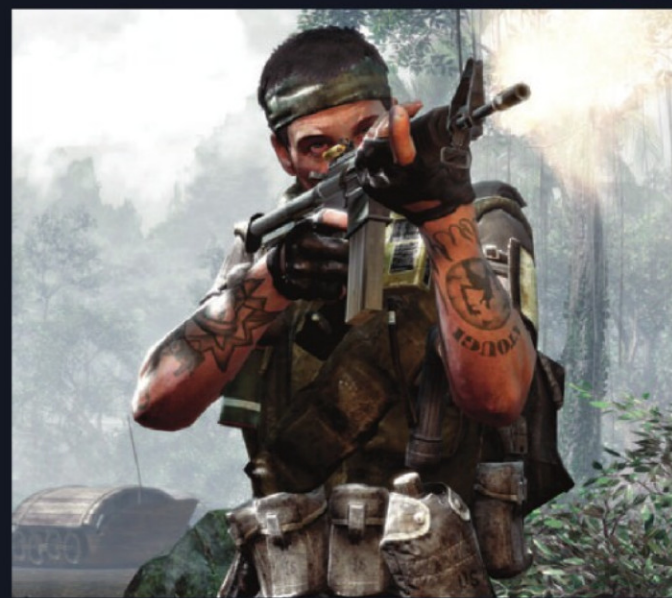
happening at all, which is where Treyarch draws its 'anything goes' card from. And it's a card the 200-strong team intends to put to full use. You won't just be running and gunning your way through this one, with the odd go on a mounted gun or trip on a row boat here and there – you'll be constantly finding yourself in new, increasingly action-packed situations with, where possible, direct first-hand control over what's happening. This means rappelling, piloting helicopters, manning the radar on an SR-71 Blackbird recon plane and much more. We imagine there'll be some FPS sections in there, too.

Black Ops is shaping up to be Treyarch's best *Call Of Duty* yet, with top-notch production values and an endless procession of white-knuckle set pieces. It's good to see the *Call Of Duty* 'B-team' doing something that isn't just a crude imitation of Infinity Ward's work, but with so much variety on offer, we've found ourselves wondering what fundamentally defines the game at its core. We hope there's something more substantial on offer than the fiendish glee of severing a trachea with the edge of a carbon steel blade.

Call Of Duty: Black Ops is being developed by Treyarch. Check the website for details: www.treyarch.com



Chances are this helicopter is going to crash before long, probably on top of some people.



There'll be a fair few traditional run-'n'-gun sections in among the new stuff.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Has a huge team with an equally huge budget behind it.
- Call Of Duty* games all sell millions so they must be great.
- You get to pilot a helicopter, not just sit in the gunner seat.
- It goes slo-mo when you get a particularly tasty kill.

READ ME

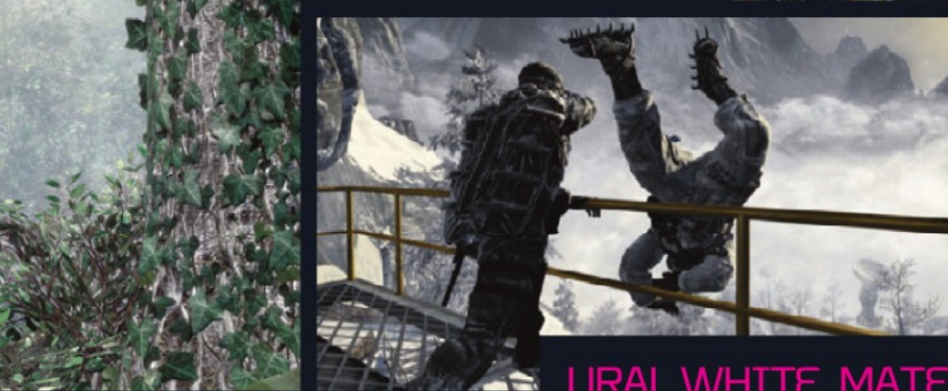
A *Call Of Duty* title with a completely new setting. Sandwiched between WWII and the present day lies the Cold War.

FIRST LOOK



Yes this is 'Nam, but this is not a 'Nam game.

The Studies and Operations Group was a real unit, but the game doesn't depict real events.



URAL WHITE, MATE

Fast forward to 1995?

TREYARCH HASN'T REVEALED

anything much about what the Russian Ural Mountains have to do with Cold War military operations, but a bit of research turned up a place called Mount Yamantau. According to US Intelligence, Russia started building a huge underground facility inside this mountain shortly after the end of the Cold War. Russia has flitted between claiming a variety of innocuous purposes behind the project and denying that it exists at all, fuelling suspicions that something is going on there. Let's just say there was a nuclear missile facility there. That would make a good *COD* scenario, wouldn't it? The Ural level revealed so far is called WMD. That fits with our theory.



REVEAL



Suitably epic. Looks like a GOW game.



RELEASE DATE: TBC 2010

God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta

Kratos returns in the palm of your hand

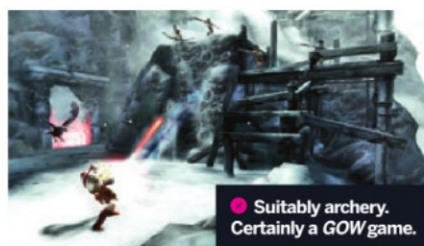
Well colour us surprised – we didn't see this one coming, caught up as we were with *God Of War III*. Yes, it's a new adventure for Kratos on the PSP made once again by Ready At Dawn (creator of the last GOW on PSP, *Chains Of Olympus*), titled *Ghost Of Sparta* and it has us excited. You see, *Chains* (84%, Play 165) was a good game for the

handheld and we thought it would be a one-off, never to be improved upon.

But no; trailers, teasers and tidbits have come out and shown us that there will indeed be a continuation of the series on handheld, set between *GOW I* and *II* and – apparently – to reveal the origins of Kratos's scar, tattoo and family. We're guessing one of them involves a mowing accident. It's also going to have refined mechanics, though we really have no idea about how right now – though we'll obviously let you know when we find out.

This is no flash in the pan sequel, and Ready At Dawn has been working on *Ghost Of Sparta* since 2008. We have faith in the company to produce another fine game for the PSP. As such, PSP owners should probably whack GOS on their 'to buy' list straight away – it's only going to be bad if something monumental goes wrong with it.

God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta is being developed by Ready At Dawn Studios. Check out www.godofwar.com/spartansstandtall for more details.



Suitably archery. Certainly a GOW game.



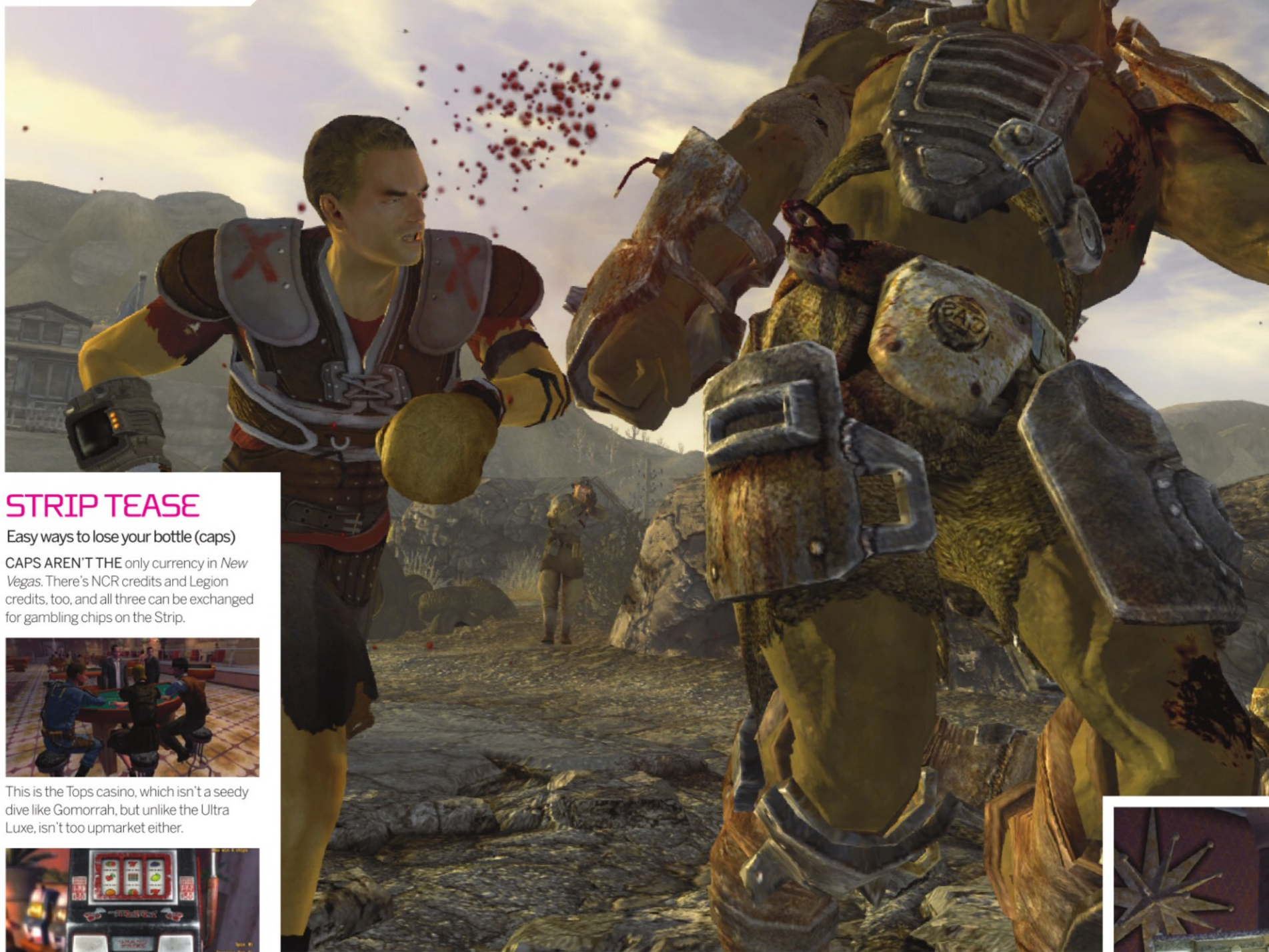
Suitably (probably) QTEy. Definitely a GOW game.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Another entry to Kratos's adventure book could be a good thing.
- Another reason to own a PSP is definitely a good thing.

- We have – whisper it quietly – faith in Ready At Dawn to get it right.
- Hammering @ on the train may become an acceptable practice.

PREVIEW



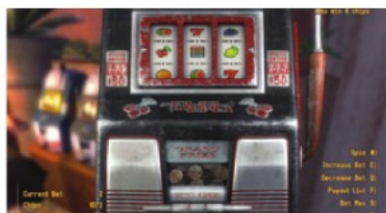
STRIP TEASE

Easy ways to lose your bottle (caps)

CAPS AREN'T THE only currency in *New Vegas*. There's NCR credits and Legion credits, too, and all three can be exchanged for gambling chips on the Strip.



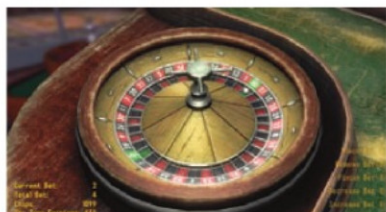
This is the Tops casino, which isn't a seedy dive like Gomorrah, but unlike the Ultra Luxe, isn't too upmarket either.



First we tried a slot machine. We kept spinning 'til it paid out, but it didn't pay out enough to cover the losses we'd made.



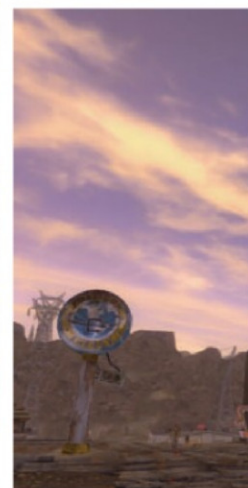
Next we tried blackjack and beat the dealer three times in a row through sheer luck. That's our kind of game.



Finally, we played roulette, which requires tactics as well as luck, so we lost badly and went away sobbing.



Even the casino with its own rollercoaster is based on a real-life location.





RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

Fallout: New Vegas

Would you like to see the desert menu?

You're dead. What? Already? Yes. We know that you've only just started and that it's not fair, but it's a fact. You have ceased to be. You are an ex-person.

That's how *Fallout: New Vegas* begins. In a sharp and deliberate contrast to *Fallout 3*, in which you start by being born, the very beginning of *Fallout: New Vegas* sees you kidnapped, shot in the head and dumped in a ditch. Who by and why? Well, finding that out will be one of your main motivations throughout the game. As will finding out why Vegas Vic the Goodsprings security robot retrieves your body and takes it to kindly physician Doc Mitchell, who somehow brings you back to life. In a post-apocalyptic wasteland does anyone really do anything purely out of the kindness of their heart? Hmm... we doubt it somehow.

The handy thing about Doc Mitchell, apart from the fact that he gives you a second chance to live, is that the recuperation process he puts you through serves as a character-creation tool. You won't be carrying over a character from *Fallout 3* here – the Mojave Desert is a completely different location with very little in the way of plot or character connections to the Capital Wasteland – you'll be creating a new one from scratch, this time by checking your reflection in a mirror for appearance, using a machine called the Vigor Tester to determine your SPECIAL stats and a psych test to get suggested Tag Skills that, just as in

Fallout 3, can be disregarded if you've got your own ideas about what to tag. It's a very similar process to growing up in *Fallout 3*, although you can create an older character this time if you wish and the whole thing is much quicker than *Fallout 3*'s extended prologue. There's no linear playable preamble here – you just create your character, leave the Doc's office and you're away.

There are numerous 'tutorial' missions scattered throughout the Doc's hometown of Goodsprings, but if you fancy wandering off to find the biggest, nastiest gang of Super Mutants in the vicinity and getting killed instantly then you can do so pretty much straight away. But don't do that, certainly not if you're playing in Hardcore mode. Oh yes, there's now a mode where healing items work over

and all that sort of thing can be bolted on most weapons, but even without mods, weapons are generally more specialised than in *Fallout 3*. In fact, some weapons are more effective against certain enemies than others, and if you're using a weapon that is ineffective against a particular enemy, you'll even get a little red shield pop up next to the enemy to let you know.

Now, when we got our hands on *Fallout: New Vegas*, we didn't get to wander around doing what we felt like. Unfortunately, the game's not finished enough for us to do that yet, so instead we sampled a selection of predetermined locations and missions, which goes somewhat against what *Fallout* is normally about, but still gave us the chance to see how *New Vegas* would contrast with *Fallout 3*.

We told her we had something to show her outside and it wasn't long before she totally, and literally, lost her head

a few seconds, which will make a *big* difference in the heat of battle, and that gives ammo a weight value, and has you becoming dehydrated when in the desert. Play all the way through in Hardcore mode and you'll get a sense of satisfaction and a Trophy. A Gold one we should hope.

Hardcore mode was something that came from the PC *Fallout 3* modding scene, as was the addition of weapon add-ons in *New Vegas*. Scopes, stabilisers, extended mags

Our first port of call was the New Vegas Strip itself, which is like nothing you'll have seen anywhere in *Fallout 3*. It's an urban environment without a single pile of rubble anywhere in sight. The only thing that's in a bad state here are some of the NPCs, namely the ones who have overindulged in NV's alcoholic temptations and are throwing up in the street. Nice. Other revellers, not quite having reached that point yet, have stripped down to their underwear and jumped into a large fountain. As we ➤

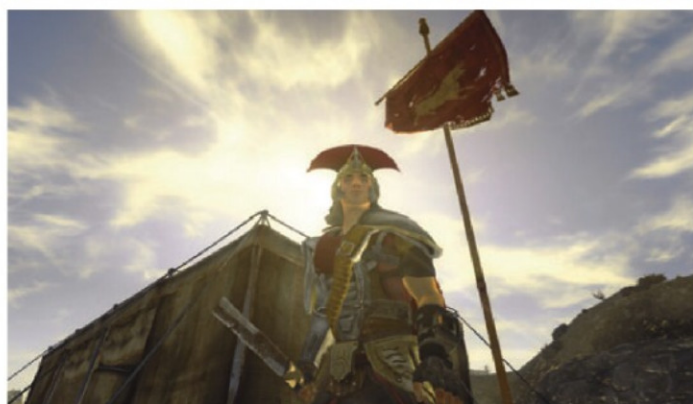
PREVIEW



● The Vault 21 hotel on the Strip really was a Vault once but got converted into a tourist attraction.



● This is Goodsprings, which is a real-life town that actually looks much like this in real life.



● There are two broad groups of Super Mutants in New Vegas. First Generation veterans of the Master's Army and Dum Dums.

➤ look on, wondering whether or not to join them, an NCR squad arrives and tells them to get out, get dressed and go home. Spoilsports.

The NCR is the New Californian Republic, one of the two main factions in *New Vegas*. NCR members are about as close as you can get to 'good guys' in a *Fallout* game, in that they seem to be trying to maintain peace and order in New Vegas, but some of their methods are questionable and they probably shouldn't be trusted. Compared to the other main faction, though, the NCR are saints. Caesar's Legion is a large army of slavers moving west across America hell-bent on destroying the NCR, occupying its territory and enslaving anyone that's left alive. The Legion was a concept developed for inclusion in the original *Fallout 3* (aka *Van Buren*), which was cancelled following the closure of Black Isle Studios in 2003. It's no coincidence that the idea came from Chris Avellone and Josh Sawyer, who were then at Black Isle and are now working at Obsidian where they're

The very beginning sees you kidnapped, shot in the head and dumped in a ditch

heading up the development of *Fallout: New Vegas*.

The story in *New Vegas* will largely be determined by which of the two main factions you decide to align yourself with. You don't necessarily have to pick one and stick with it, but a lot of the main campaign missions will involve working for or against one or the other. While we didn't get the chance to make any for ourselves, we get a sense that there are many more choices to make that actually have more specific consequences than you got in *Fallout 3*.

In the next scenario we played, there was one such choice (although for the purposes of our demo, it wasn't left open for us to make). The Dinky Dinosaur sniper's nest (see boxout on page 55) is manned by two NCR marksmen, Boone and Manny, working in shifts. Boone told us that his wife was missing. He believed she'd been taken by slavers

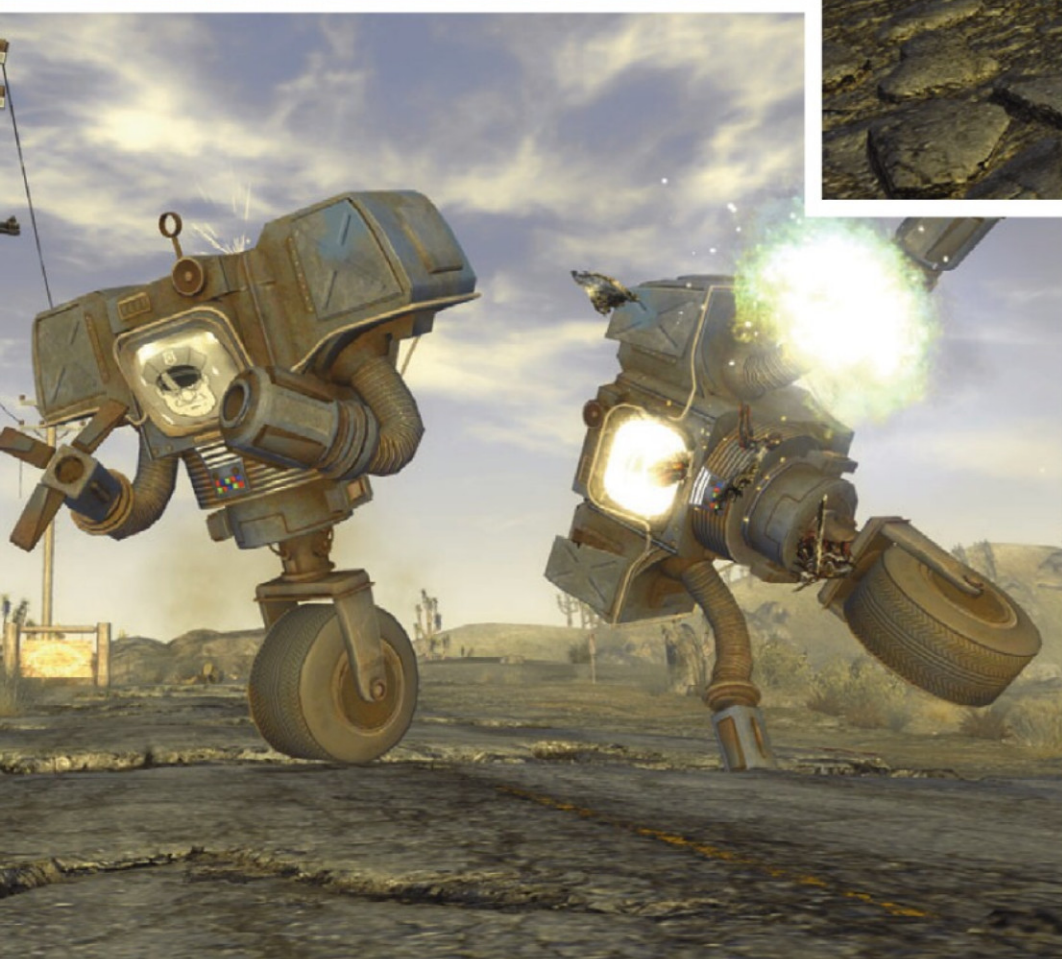
and also that someone in Novac was responsible. He asked us to find out who and lead the guilty party into the area directly in front of Dinky so that he could 'take care of the rest'.

After a bit of snooping around we found an invoice in a safe revealing that it was a woman called Jenny May who had sold Mrs Boone. We told her we had something to show her outside in front of Dinky and, well, it wasn't long before she totally, and literally, lost her head. We then went and showed Boone the invoice as proof. We did all this so that Boone would join us as a companion, but there were plenty of other options available. We could have led Cliff, the man who runs the Dinky souvenir shop inside Dinky, to a completely innocent death, but whether we could have then persuaded Boone that he'd killed the right guy, we're not sure. We also could have killed Jenny May for ourselves but, while ➤





● This should tell you all you need to know about how the town of Novac got its name.



DO YOU THINK THE SNIPER SAURUS?

Dinky The Dinosaur is more than just a tourist attraction

YOU MIGHT THINK it ridiculous for a place to have a huge wooden dinosaur next to the main road into town – and, yeah, it is – but it's actually pretty common for small towns in the US to have stuff like that built in the hope that people passing through will stop to take pictures and lend their patronage to local businesses. For example, no

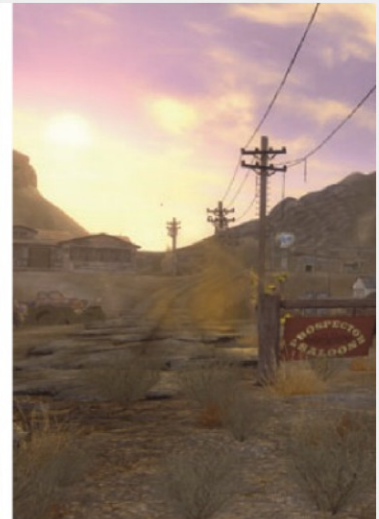
road trip through Minnesota would be complete without a visit to Delano's giant fibreglass chicken, and when driving through Iowa, you'd be mad to miss out on the famous pink top-hat-wearing elephant of Marquette. Anyway, Dinky The Dinosaur is one of these things, only unlike most of them he's useful... as a sniping tower.



PREVIEW



It's possible to obtain a portable, use-anywhere version of this devastating orbital laser.



> we'd have had all the fun of killing an unarmed woman in cold blood, that might have pissed Boone off. There may even have been some way of colluding with, or maybe even blackmailing her. We saw dialogue options that seemed to point that way, but they were off-limits. One thing we did do was tell Boone that we led Jenny May out there because we wanted her dead and that we didn't have any proof, just for a laugh like. He didn't see the funny side and attacked us, so we loaded the auto-save and did it properly second try.

were we alone and neutral we could visit either settlement without fear of being attacked on site and could choose to perform missions helping whichever side we wanted. However, given that Boone, an NCR member, was with us we decided to go to the NCR camp first to see how we might be able to help. We ran a couple of errands for the camp commander, Major Polatli, retrieving some vital supplies from an ambushed convoy, only to be ambushed by a Legion gang ourselves, then helping out Doctor Richards in the field hospital

Major Polatli was ready to order an attack on Nelson and asked us to join in, which we did. Our mission objective was to kill Dead Sea, the Legion commander in Nelson, but the more Legion troops we killed the better, as someone back at camp was prepared to pay good money for their ears (something to do with boosting camp morale). The NCR grunts accompanying us fell quickly, but the Legion slavers were no match for the formidable double-team of Boone and **Play** and before long everyone was dead and our demo drew to a close.

New Vegas isn't straying far from *Fallout 3*'s successful formula, and why should it, but it's shaping up to be a worthy fusion of old ideas from the first two *Fallout* games, and new ideas from fan mods, which is perhaps the best kind of user feedback you can get. There are no great leaps forward, just the solid execution and imaginative augmentation of proven mechanics and technology, along with a markedly different, but still familiar, setting. The fact that it's *not* called *Fallout 4* is an admission by Bethesda that no one should expect a game that makes *Fallout 3* feel redundant. It's very much a case of 'more of the same,' although it is *much* more. But if we said... [Speech] We don't want more of a game we gave 97%... we'd be lying.

Fallout: New Vegas is in the capable hands of Obsidian Entertainment. Visit www.obsidianent.com for more info.

There's no linear playable preamble here – you just create your character and you're away

With Boone now our companion, we set off into the desert towards Helios One, a solar power station occupied by the NCR, but currently only running at one per cent efficiency. There is a mission that involves fixing the station then directing the energy wherever you want to with some presumably quite major consequences, but we weren't going to be wielding that kind of power in this demo. Instead we spoke to some NCR troops loitering near the station and were told that Caesar's Legion had taken over the NCR town of Nelson, so that's where we headed next.

Finding ourselves in a dusty valley between Nelson and an NCR camp set up nearby, we were told that

using our conveniently high medical skills. Obsidian is trying to include more situations where specific skills are required than seen in *Fallout 3*, especially in dialogue, where Speech won't be the only skill used to persuade people to see your side of things. And even if you don't have the right skills for certain situations, there'll usually be other options. For example, in the field hospital if you had the necessary items to treat a particular injury (leg splint, crutch, surgical tubing and other such items) you could attempt to treat a patient, even if your Medical skill was low, although success would be by no means guaranteed.

Once we'd brought him supplies and patched up some of his men,



The Rad Pack are like the Rat Pack, only more irradiated and less famous.



Helios One is a major solar energy plant. If you can get it running, you can decide where to route the power.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A lot of the game's locations are actually real places.
- Celebrity voice talent in the pipeline, but no name revealed yet.
- The story changes according to who, if anyone, you ally with.
- Features a much broader, crazier range of weaponry.

READ ME

The main plot thread in *Fallout: New Vegas* centres on a war between the NCR and Caesar's Legion, an army of gangsters, bandits and raiders.



Decapitation still has an important role to play in the *Fallout* experience.



The NCR's flag is based on the flag of the real-life Californian Republic, a government that lasted just 26 days in 1846.

Q&A Pete Hines, vice president, PR & Marketing – Bethesda

The Reputation system in *New Vegas* means that the consequences of your actions have a much wider variety than simply adding or removing Karma. Can you tell us more?

It's something that Bethesda Game Studios has done in their previous titles, where there was a lot more of a faction element, how everybody else in the world felt about you. So it was a logical addition to *Fallout*, to have that be a factor. And not just how does Caesar's Legion feel about you and how does NCR feel about you, but how do the folks in Goodsprings feel about you, how do the folks in Novac or Primm or wherever... Just giving your actions more of a tangible sense in the world.

apart. It's the simple execution of ideas and how well you execute them that determines whether or not something is good or fun or memorable.

Do you think the Reputation system feeds into that sense of acting out your very own, unique story in the game?

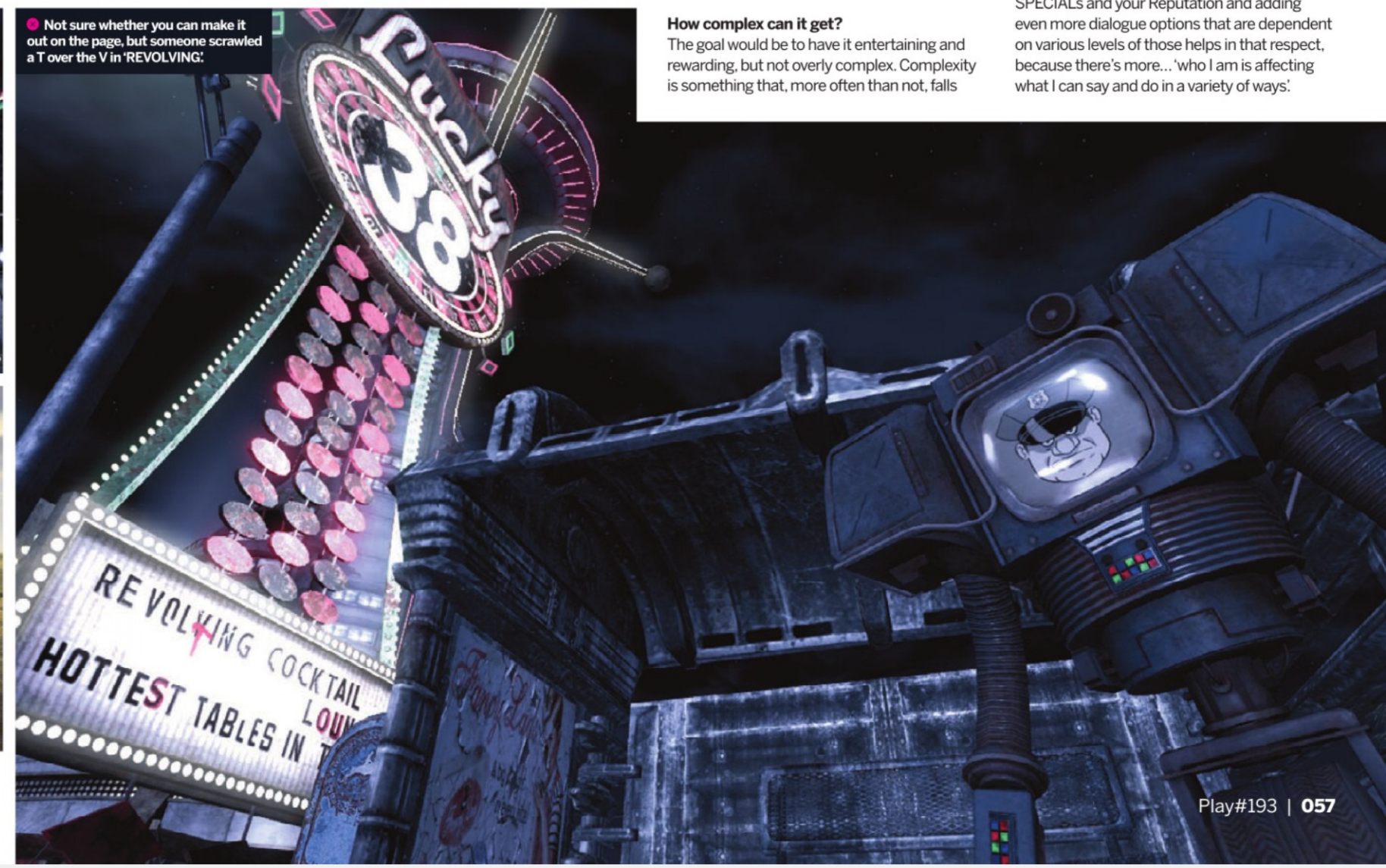
Yeah, anything you can do to make your actions and make who you are in the world seem more real and give you more tangible consequences is ultimately going to add to the notion of you telling your own story through the actions that you do and the things that you choose.

Obsidian has done any number of things that help that. Taking your skills and your SPECIALs and your Reputation and adding even more dialogue options that are dependent on various levels of those helps in that respect, because there's more... 'who I am is affecting what I can say and do in a variety of ways.'

How complex can it get?

The goal would be to have it entertaining and rewarding, but not overly complex. Complexity is something that, more often than not, falls

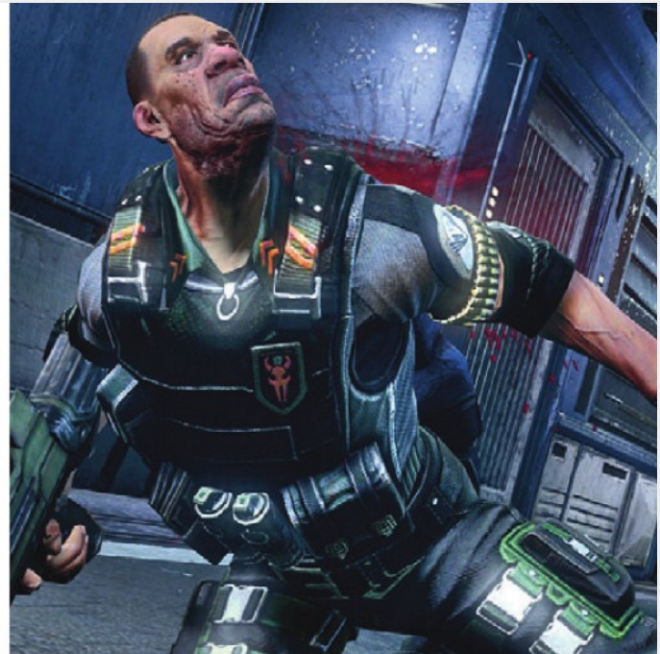
Not sure whether you can make it out on the page, but someone scrawled a T over the V in 'REVOLVING'.



PREVIEW



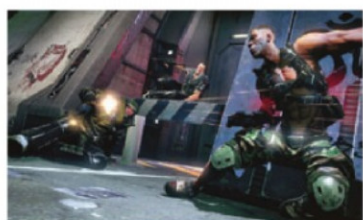
There will always be 16 combatants on the field, with any shortfall in human players being made up by AI bots.



UP AND UNDER

Time to get SMART

SMART STANDS FOR Smooth Movement Across Random Terrain, and is the system whereby you can negotiate the environment seamlessly without any of that old-fashioned stuff like jumping and crouching. It's similar to *Assassin's Creed's* running, jumping and climbing in that you hold a button and your soldier automatically does the rest. And different character types will do different things with the same obstacle. For example, an agile will vault over a barrier, a regular will slide under and a heavy will stop dead and have to go around.

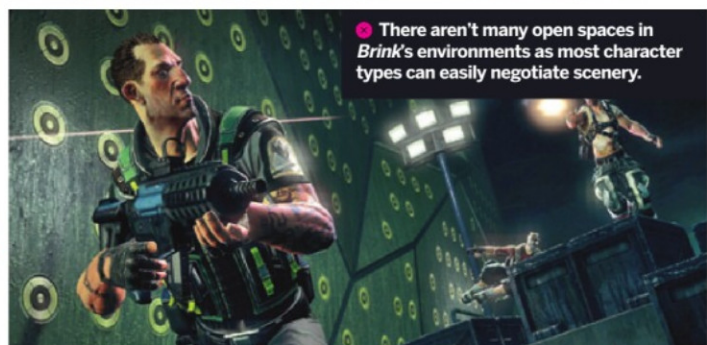


Squads will benefit from having a full range of classes among their ranks.





● You can customise the appearance of your soldier in loads of different ways, so no two need look the same.



● There aren't many open spaces in *Brink*'s environments as most character types can easily negotiate scenery.



● Once an enemy is dead, an Operative can copy his appearance and infiltrate the opposing force.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER



Brink

Splash Damage Brinks its a game

PS3

Gaming as a whole has gradually worked its way into the mainstream over the last three decades partly through improved technology and production values, partly through better marketing and partly through the development of games and gaming devices that can be understood immediately by pretty much anyone. But even as gaming basks on its throne as the 21st Century's dominant entertainment form, there are still many types of game that simply are not at all understood or enjoyed by casual outsiders. It seems odd, but one of those types of games is the online FPS.

It's odd because *Call Of Duty* is an FPS that has enjoyed unprecedented mainstream success *because of* and not *despite* its multiplayer. But it really hasn't opened the floodgates. Online gaming continues to grow in popularity, but *COD* is one of very few exceptions to the rule that online shooters are intimidating and unwelcoming to newcomers. This is almost certainly because the online FPS genre is rooted in PC gaming with its clans, its modding scenes and its full-time levels of dedication. That's the kind of background most of the developers of these games have come from, but it's a world away from what works for a more casual audience. And we don't

mean Wii owners, we just mean less dedicated than your typical *Enemy Territory* player, which isn't necessarily *that* casual at all. Infinity Ward pulled off a hell of a trick with *Call Of Duty 4*. It created a multiplayer game that was accessible and appealing to regular Joes, yet deep and complex enough for veterans to plunge hundreds of hours into it. It could even turn casual dabblers into hardcore obsessives in just a few weeks. Now, has any other game got what it takes to pull that off?

With a lot of developers afraid to try anything other than cloning *Call Of Duty*'s multiplayer structure, it's refreshing to see Splash Damage attempting to bridge the casual-hardcore gap in its own way. These guys have made popular games before – *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory* has been downloaded, albeit for free, an impressive 15 million times – but realise that for *Brink* to stand a chance of pulling people away from *COD* for more than about a day, it can't just be good. It needs to work hard to persuade the unconverted that it's worth taking the time to understand and appreciate ideas like specific objectives, proper co-op teamwork and relatively narrow, specialised player classes. PC shooters have been thriving on these kinds of concepts for years, but they do tend to make the

initial learning curve much steeper and result in a more demanding, more disciplined style of play. They're very rewarding to play, but not very easy to get into. One of the reasons *COD* has succeeded is that it's generally pretty light in these kinds of areas.

Brink, on the other hand, is not. Splash Damage is sticking to its guns and making another shooter that rewards and encourages tactical, co-operative play. Instead of watering that side of things down, *Brink* is hoping to present it all in such a way that its enticing and intriguing rather than intimidating and inaccessible. Basically the boundary between single-player and multiplayer is as fuzzy as possible in *Brink*. While it's designed for multiplayer use, it feels a lot like a single-player game, with missions and objectives and a lot of events and story scenes. You can play it in single-player, but multiplayer will always just be an option away, with a simple change of settings allowing other players to drop in replacing AI bots.

It's very clever and we can see how it *could* work. But will it? Impossible to say, but if it does, it could mark yet another major step out of obscurity for a hitherto hardcore genre of gaming.

Brink is being developed by Splash Damage. Check the website for more details: www.splashdamage.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

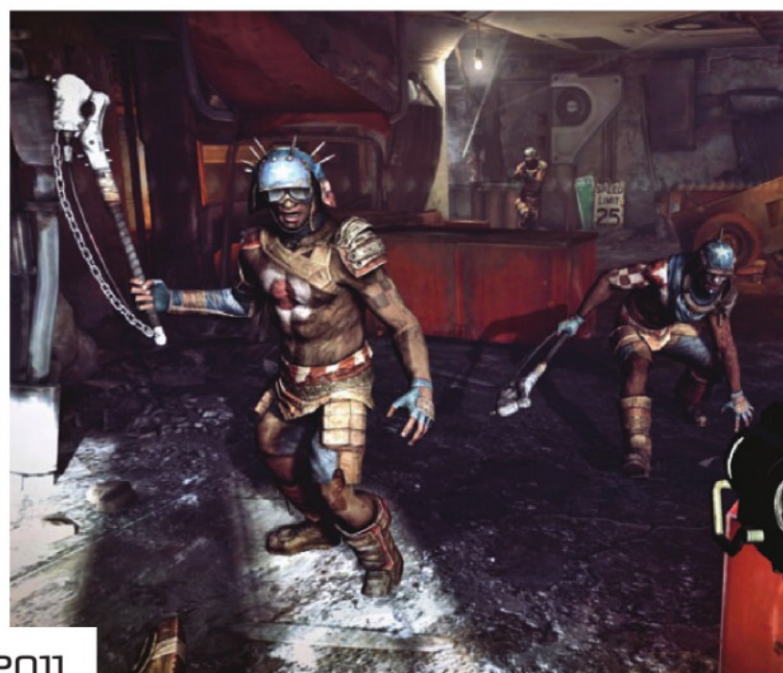
- The game's different character types play in very different ways.
- Side missions in a multiplayer game? Hmmm... an interesting idea.
- Makes good efforts to lure newcomers to the multiplayer mode.
- Has its own unique visual style making it stand out from other FPSs.

READ ME

Mission-based multiplayer shooter from the modders-turned-developers behind *Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory* and *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars*.



Rumour has it that a governmental organisation called The Authority, might be responsible for all the mutants.



RELEASE DATE: MARCH 2011

Rage

It's a post-apocalyptic wasteland

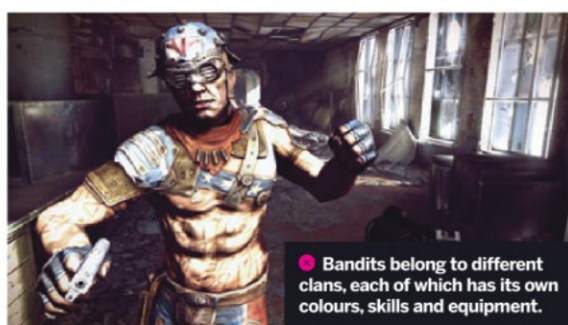
For a long time now, it's seemed like the main point of focus for *Rage* has been how it'll all fit on a single Blu-ray but will require multiple discs on the 360. Yes, this is true. Anyone playing *Rage* on the 360 will have to swap discs at the halfway point. Now, let's move on and talk about exactly what kind of game it is. Tim Willits, creative director at id Software, has been pretty open about *Rage*'s influences:

"There are a lot of aspects to *Rage* that aren't groundbreaking in themselves, but when you put them in a whole package, you need to make them work, you need to make them fit, you need to make

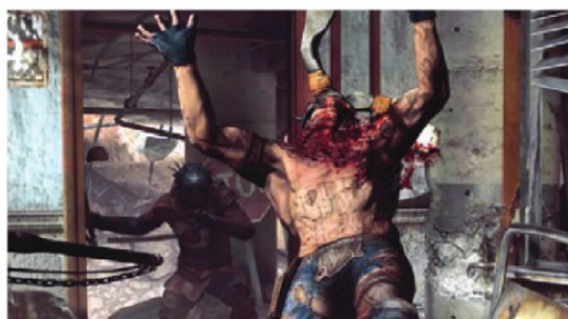
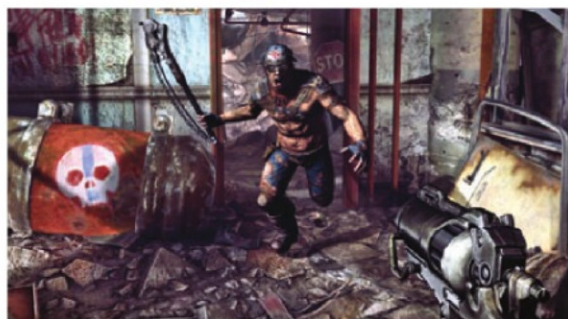
players feel that it makes sense when they're switching between gameplay types... so getting it all to gel has been the biggest challenge, but has been the most fun, too."

So id's making few claims about doing much that's new, but is keen to point out that it is putting old ideas together in a new way. With this in mind, we feel entirely justified in describing *Rage* using lots of other games as reference points. Think *Borderlands*' setting, tone and structure with the RPG stats turned way down and the action turned way up. At its core *Rage* is an action title, with all the big, loud, chunky, reflexive combat you'd expect from the people that

brought you *Wolfenstein*, *Doom* and *Quake*. So yes, the action is quicker and less measured than in *Borderlands*, but there is a little bit of thought to it here and there – we got definite echoes of *BioShock*. For example, there are a lot of items to collect that can be sold or used to build new items and upgrade existing ones, so you'll be doing a lot of looting between skirmishes. Then there are the weapons, which are numerous and varied and can each take a selection of different ammo types. There'll also be opportunities to use the environment against your enemies using fire and electricity in a similar, if slightly simpler, way to *BioShock*. Finally there's the



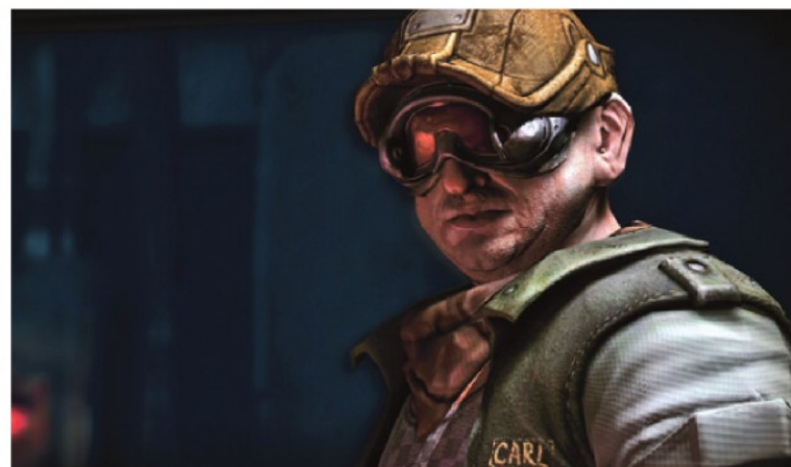
Bandits belong to different clans, each of which has its own colours, skills and equipment.



UPDATE



● Aim it just right and this wing blade can decapitate an enemy.



Nanotrites, millions of tiny robots that have been injected into your bloodstream. Willits was guarded about what effect these might have, but did state that they are "more than meets the eye". Don't be

It's not the most original game ever, but Rage still manages to stand out

surprised if it turns out they grant you Plasmid-esque powers.

Buck Rogers was also name-checked, mainly because your character has woken up in the distant future after a long cryogenic sleep. We also hope it means he's slightly fat, but in a really sexy way.

So yes, it's not the most original game ever, but *Rage* still stands out. This is partly because the way it fuses elements together isn't quite like anything we've seen before, but mainly because it wears the id mark

of quality with pride – something that hasn't been seen for a while. The reason it takes up so much disc space is that the game world is made up of what Willits calls "uniquely textured areas" meaning that there's very little in the way of repeated scenery, and fantastic

levels of detail. And all this flies by at what appears to be a constant 60fps, a feat that Willits is almost casual about. "It just makes it feel... so connected, especially with the vehicle combat, at that frame rate you feel locked into the cars, and it just makes the experience tight. John Carmack loves to get things running as fast as possible. He's the genius behind the technology."

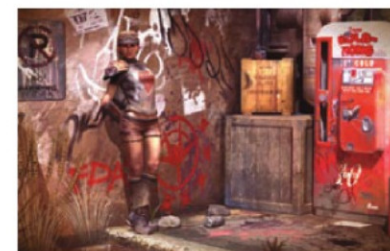
And the genius behind a potential return to the forefront for id Software by the look of it. We're tempted to cryogenically freeze ourselves 'til 2011.

Rage is being developed by id Software. Check the website for more details: www.idsoftware.com

WATER COMPLETE DUMP

A Wellspring of no hope

THE TOWN OF Wellspring will be your hub for the first half of the game. It's built up around one of the few sources of non-contaminated water in the wasteland and as such is a popular place to go, as well as a target for bandits and other nasty so-and-sos. It's the first place you visit in the game, and fortunately some of its inhabitants are friendly enough to warn you about your attire. You're wearing an Ark suit (which we're sure is nothing like a Vault suit), which marks you out as an Ark survivor and therefore someone who The Authority would dearly love to 'speak to'.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME

- Not particularly original but it is technically very, very impressive.
- Has a rather promising balance of different gameplay styles.

- It's an id Software title that's been made by id itself.
- You don't have to swap discs on the PS3 version. Ha ha!

READ ME

Co-founder of id Software John Carmack really is a tech genius. As well as game development, he's also heavily involved in actual, real-life rocket science.

PREVIEW



Welcome to the worst screenshot of all time.



It will be interesting to see how the US's 'enemies' are portrayed.

RELEASE DATE: 15 OCTOBER

Medal Of Honor

EA is Honor bound

Beards. Everywhere with the beards. When the chap from EA showing you the walkthrough of the *Medal Of Honor* reboot has a beard almost on a par with the Tier 1 operative we've seen so much of in recent months, you know there's something special going on. Well, something special beard-wise, at least. Excitement about the game was definitely sitting hand in hand with beard-jealousy that day.

But the game – that was there, too. We were privy to a walkthrough of a level based around a Ranger squad as they moved through a few Afghani canyons and villages, clearing them out and advancing on a final objective. The first thing that strikes you about the new *MOH* is how nice it looks – but nice in the 'realistic' way, meaning ultimately it's a bit bland. There's only so much sand we can look at, after all. Nevertheless, soldiers in your squad are well animated and act suitably like people for it to be a convincing charade to take part in.

The mission played out as a series of brief, but intense, encounters with enemy fighters. They popped out from all around the player, above and below, inside and outside, and were dealt with in due course – all while your squad-mates barked out orders, directions and other professional-sounding snippets. There certainly wasn't any bombast on show here. Air support, IEDs and other such things we've heard so much about in the news in recent years

such reactions from people, but it's not always interesting for the right reasons – first and foremost, we want a game that's good to play.

It's hard to shake the feeling that what we were shown was pretty much what we expected. Obviously it's impossible to really rate how well EALA is handling the whole 'human' aspect of the soldiers with such a brief demo, devoid of any story. But from an in-game-mechanics standpoint, this looks to be another FPS set during times of

We need something truly special to make us sit up and take notice

added a huge sense of credibility to the game, while at the same time reigniting our fears for the game's reception: is it too soon? This is a conflict that is still going on. Will the enemy combatants be treated with the same respect as the coalition troops? Will they be treated with any respect at all? It's interesting that a game can draw

contemporary combat. That's not to say we're underwhelmed or not looking forward to it, it's just that we need something truly special to make us sit up and take notice. Hopefully – with more context – *Medal Of Honor* will still impress.

Medal Of Honor is being developed by EALA and DICE. Check out www.eagames.co.uk for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- The impressive scale and good looks make us coo.
- Production values up the wahoo will help no end.
- Lots of banter, but technical banter. Not ridiculous banter.
- Respect for the soldiers (though probably none for the enemy).

READ ME

The *Medal Of Honor* series began back on PSone in 1999 and Steven Spielberg himself had a hand in the game's story and setting.





● Is that a Timex Expedition he's wearing?



● This looks suspiciously like it's from the trailer.



THEN WHAT HAPPENS?

So you shoot some folks. And the rest of the game?

WE'VE ONLY SEEN brief glimpses of what *Medal Of Honor* has to offer – sand, shooting people and getting blown up after you hear a mobile phone ring (someone's been watching *The Hurt Locker*). But what else will there be? Well, EA was as cagey as you would expect, but we have been told there is a mission where you get to control an Apache attack chopper, and that the split between US Ranger and Tier 1 Operative missions is something like 30-70 in favour of the latter. This, folks, is a Tier 1 story – of that we have no doubt.



RELEASE DATE: TBC 2011

Bulletstorm

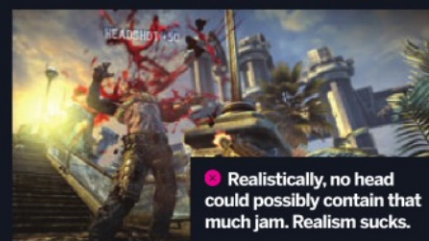
It's raining gats and slugs

A heart-wrenching father-daughter relationship. Thematic commentary on socio-political philosophy and ideology.

The first-hand experience of a slow, unavoidable, tragic death. Combatants expressing feelings of loss, frustration, disillusionment, guilt and regret. These are all things that you never used to get in FPSs. You used to get a gun and some enemies then, later on, a slightly bigger, better gun. Oh, and points. Lots of points.

And in a lot of ways, it was better that way. Apart from anything else, it's just not realistic to expect gamers to enjoy killing people without giving the experience a competitive edge. Real-life soldiers don't become expert marksmen by pondering their motivations and nature of human conflict and the rights and wrongs of the situations they find themselves in. No, they get good by counting how many people they've killed, killing them in style and getting lots of high fives and props from their buddies. Right?

This is what *Bulletstorm* is all about – killing lots of things in tons of cool ways. For points. There are even preset



● Realistically, no head could possibly contain that much jam. Realism sucks.

skillshots for bonus scores such as the Mercy bonus, obtained by shooting an enemy in the balls, then ending his misery by shooting him in the head. Frankly, putting something like that in a believable context would be distasteful, which is why *Bulletstorm* doesn't. Ah, it's just like shooters used to be.

Bulletstorm is being developed by both Epic Games and People Can Fly. Check both websites: www.epicgames.com and www.peoplecanfly.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

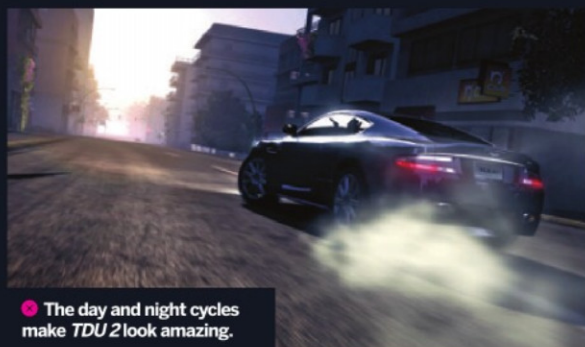
- Epic Games is involved and there are few tastier developers around.
- Shooting for shooting's sake. Which is pretty refreshing these days.

- You get rewarded for killing your enemies using skill and style.
- Violence is always at its best when it's done in a funny way.



● There's actually a lot more in it than just bullets. Lightning whips, for example.

PREVIEW



• The day and night cycles make *TDU 2* look amazing.



• Once you've got some of the better cars things will really heat up.



BEST GAMING ISLANDS Surrounded by water, but full of fun



MONKEY ISLAND - *The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition* should soon be arriving on the European PS Store. Few gaming islands are so chock full of hilarious characters...



SHIVERING ISLES - ...Apart from *Elder Scrolls*' Shivering Isles, home of Sheogorath who utters gems like, "I'm so happy, I could tear your intestines out and strangle you with them!"



LIBERTY CITY - These islands are the base of operations for two great *GTA* games and have displayed the power of the PlayStation console on which they were launched.



PANAU ISLANDS - It's not just the scale that made these islands so impressive but the scope of things they let you do and the visuals you got to enjoy once up above them.



RAINBOW ISLANDS - Island-based platforming is a staple of the action genre, but few boast the use of rainbows. For that alone *Rainbow Islands* is on our list of greats.

EXCLUSIVE
HANDS-ON



RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Test Drive Unlimited 2

The drive of your social life

What Eden Games has lacked in terms of execution this generation it has made up for with ambition and that's promising. We didn't get to see *Test Drive Unlimited* on the PS3, but it was a brave attempt at melding the worlds of hardcore car porn and MMOs. *Alone In The Dark* was similarly ambitious of course. Eden admitted to us last issue that it could have done more to make *TDU* work as an online community and that really is the focus we'll see when *Test Drive Unlimited 2* comes to the PS3 later this year.

Much of the template for *TDU 2* was there in the original game. A large, open island, an emphasis on wealth and luxury lifestyles and most importantly a simple challenge system for getting into races online. All that still remains, it's just been brought even further into the foreground. The first step is a change in setting from the remote tranquillity of Oahu in Hawaii to the chic sprawl of Ibiza. If ever there was a location on the planet that epitomised fast-paced living then Ibiza is it.

The lifestyle side of things is incredibly important to *TDU 2*,

playing a major part in the game's levelling system. Customising your avatar, decorating your apartment, buying cars, painting cars and generally living the high life all adds up in experience. In fact you could spend more time on these things than on racing and still build up a solid reputation online thanks to the four-tiered levelling system. Competition XP is rewarded, as you might expect, for getting into

change things up a bit. For instance it wants to offer both arcade and sim handling for different cars so that you can choose your playing style for the game. Examples given by Eden include having an Audi TT RS playing in a more arcade fashion, while a Ford Mustang offers a tougher, sim-style mechanic.

Some of that arcade-style gameplay will also feed back into the experience building, as a

Eden has been clear that the handling of the last game wasn't good and it's working hard to change things up a bit

races on and offline. Discovery XP can be achieved by driving around Ibiza and finding wrecks of fancy cars and other Easter eggs. Social experience comes from teaming up with others and generally being sociable. And finally Collection experience comes from buying cars and other items.

That should give you a good impression of the diversity of things there are to do in *TDU 2*, but racing is still the major focus. With respect to the last game, Eden has been clear that the handling wasn't good enough and it's working hard to

stunt-chaining mechanic earns you cash for doing things like drifting, jumping and near misses on the highways. The catch is that it's a bit like *The Weakest Link* and if you don't bank your cash before you crash you lose what you've earned. You can also do a fair bit of damage to your cars this time around, but this will not affect performance or handling in any way.

We're not sure how that's all going to come together. Attempting to be all things to all people could be *TDU 2*'s undoing, but we applaud the attempt. We also applaud Eden



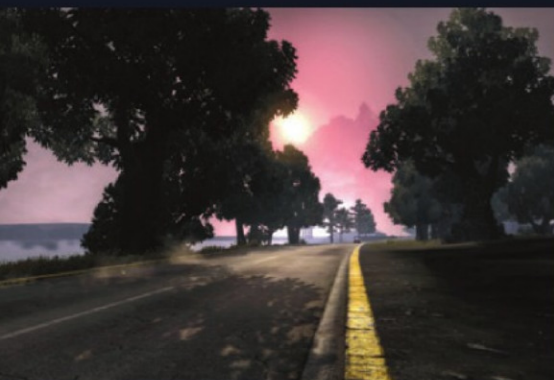
● Air-time is good as it earns you cold, hard cash in this game.



● This car is yellow and that means it's much faster than other cars.



● Scratched up to all hell, but still motoring on. That's the TDU way.



● No James Bond in this game, although maybe there should be.



> for trying to mix up driving styles beyond just how things work on the tarmac. Off-road driving will be an important part of building up your discovery experience as you look around for new cars to add to the showrooms. With an island the size of Ibiza with its rich forests and blank deserts, it makes sense to take advantage of more than just the roads.

As we've said, though, there's even more to *Test Drive Unlimited 2* than just the driving part. Socialising wasn't all that easy in the first *TDU*, but it should be much simpler this time around. Once you've got yourself a pad in the game you can invite friends to visit you and walk freely around your crib. Likewise you can hang out at locations around Ibiza, like car showrooms and bars, with up to 32 people at a time. If you prefer something a little more intimate you can ride shotgun in a friend's car or you could always just have your friends join you in a hot tub. Nothing odd about that.

But that's small potatoes in terms of the social side of *Test*

Drive Unlimited 2. The killer app of multiplayer gaming here is the Club system, which acts in a similar fashion to guilds in MMORPGs. Collectively you can buy a Club House and fit it up with its own garage. That means that a Club can collectively own vehicles, pooling together to get the top motors and

the beginning of the *Test Drive Unlimited 2* world as Oahu, Hawaii returns in this sequel with more challenges and places to visit than before. We're essentially getting both games in one, which isn't too shabby at all really. We're also getting day and night cycles and weather systems to give the islands

Off-road driving will be an important part of building up your discovery experience as you look around for new cars

taking turns to race it out in the big bad world against rival groups. Your Club can be customised to your preferred tastes and interests to attract new members or you could keep it exclusive among friends. It's very much up to you.

Build up enough money and enough of a reputation and you'll work your way up the social ladder getting your hands on more designer clothes, nicer houses and eventually even a yacht. And that boat isn't just for show either, because much like your typical MMO it turns out that Ibiza is only

a little more character. And then there will be post-release support to think about as Eden has promised that bikes will also join the roster of vehicles as DLC further down the line and we should think plenty more besides will arrive, too. All of this adds up to a game that seems to be stretching itself in a lot of different directions. Hopefully it won't over-stretch and end up falling short, as we've unfortunately seen in the past.

Eden Games is still in charge of all things *Test Drive*. You can see more about all that at www.testdriveunlimited2.com



● You will have to work your way up from some pretty ropery cars.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Two massive islands with hundreds of miles of road to explore.
- A mixture of handling setups to suit every racing fan's preferred style.
- Fully licensed cars with detailed interiors as well as exteriors to fawn over.
- A chance to live the Ibiza lifestyle without breaking the bank or car.

READ ME

Eden is still calling *TDU 2* an MOOR. That stands for Massive Open Online Racing. We still don't like the acronym in all honesty.

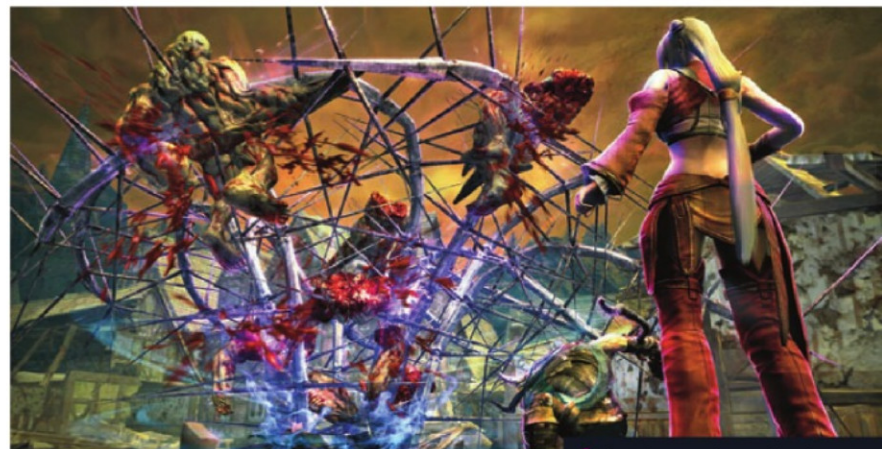
● This is what the inside of the new Aston Martin looks like. Nice.

DOWN TO THE STITCHING

The devil's in the detail for Eden ON TOP OF the islands that have been re-created using satellite imagery, all the cars in *TDU 2* are fully licensed and have been pieced together in-game with the help of the manufacturers to ensure the greatest possible detail. That doesn't just mean that the lights are in the right place or the wheels are round. We're talking about detailed cockpits in every car right down to the stitching of the leather and the colour of the dashboard display. That's some serious dedication if you ask us.



● Heinrich is quite the gentleman, but his officer credentials are still to be proved.



● Gretchen can be a spiky character if you rub her up the wrong way.

RELEASE DATE: 2011

Knight's Contract

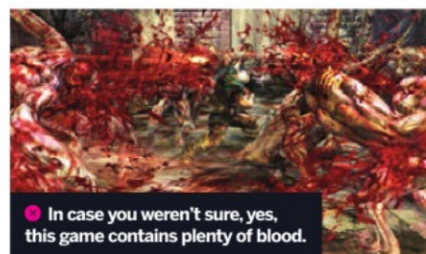
Thankfully free of legal paperwork

Marrying together a mixture of hack-'n'-slash actioners and chucking in some co-op AI to boot, *Knight's Contract* is yet another Namco Bandai game that's aiming its sights very high indeed. It's interesting though to see just how different it is to Namco's other AI partner games, *Majin* and *Enslaved*. All are going in different directions and all pursue their goals in unique ways.

Knight's Contract is set in a medieval-looking Germany where you will be playing as Heinrich, a quite literally invincible warrior who must cut his way through demonic forces using a rather large scythe. Of course, he is not alone and this is where Heinrich's invulnerability becomes less of a gameplay issue. He is joined by a resurrected witch by the name of Gretchen and it is her health bar that must be watched and protected at all times. That is a bit of a drag, but Gretchen has an upside in that her witchy powers are for much more than just pretty firework displays.

Much like Bayonetta, Gretchen has a whole series of fancy kill moves that tie in with the combos and help Heinrich to bring down some rather large monsters. For instance she can pin their hands (or claws) to the ground using magical spikes for easy beatings to be handed out, or have them chewed by a carnivorous plant. It's bloody and gruesome work, but someone's got to do it.

Namco Bandai is developing *Knight's Contract* internally, but at the time of going to press it doesn't have a website. Keep an eye on namcobandaignames.eu in the meantime.

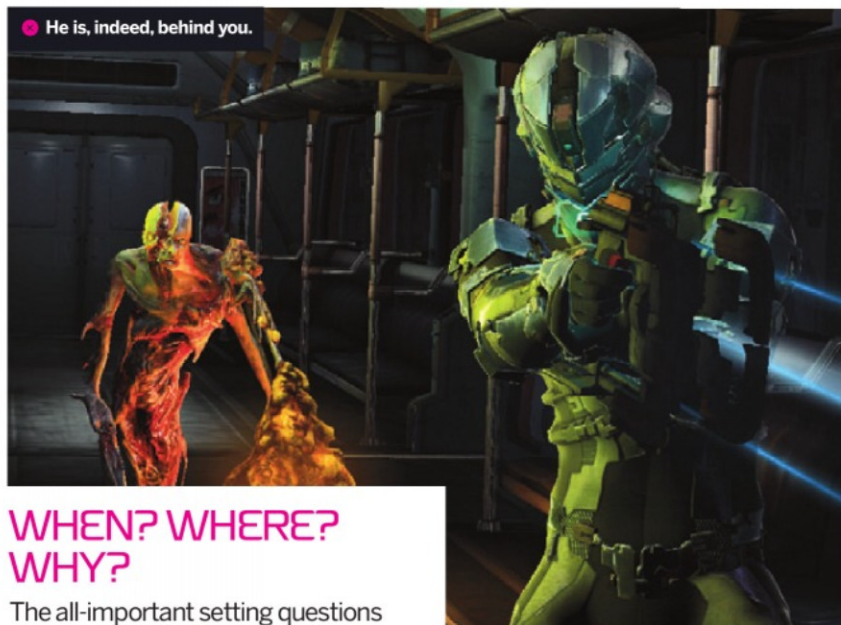


● In case you weren't sure, yes, this game contains plenty of blood.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Wild magic powers that embellish your moves and make the action crazier.
- An interesting twist on the whole health bar staple of such games.
- Easy to access hacking gameplay a bit like *Darksiders* or *Bayonetta*.
- Nationality bending as Japanese developer re-creates German location.

PREVIEW

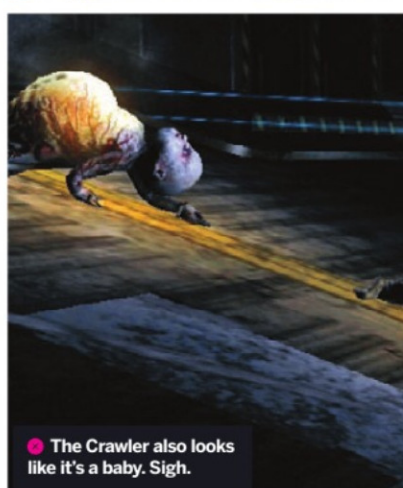


WHEN? WHERE? WHY?

The all-important setting questions



YOU MAY ALREADY know, but for the benefit of those who don't: *Dead Space 2* is set about three years after the events of the first game. Isaac has escaped the Ishimura and finds himself on The Sprawl – a space city on Titan, moon of Saturn – watching as a new Necromorph infestation breaks out. Needless to say, he doesn't just stand by and let it happen.



RELEASE DATE: SPRING 2011

Dead Space 2

With a new faster, more responsive Isaac

So what's multiplayer like then?

Ask us when we know. Next question.

Isaac is a walking, talking, fully fledged character now. Explain.

You're doing that thing where you don't actually ask questions. Still, we'll answer: Visceral is bringing in what it's calling Isaac 2.0. Aside from the fact he now talks and has a face, he is faster, more responsive and controls easier for the player. All in all, he seems like a fine update to the faceless, slow mute from *Dead Space*.

So if it's faster, does that mean it's an action game?

We asked that question of Visceral, and were told unequivocally that this is still a horror game. There will still be moments of quiet, slower sections and a general, all-encompassing feeling of dread. It will still put the willies up you, basically.

Alright then, I'm almost satisfied with that. But what about the Necromorphs – have they changed in any way or is it still the same grab-bag of unsettling alien reprobates?

Yes.

What?

Oh for the love of... There are the same

enemies as last time around, just to annoy and terrify you. There are also new enemies, a few of which we know about. The Stalker, for example, is a quick-moving Necromorph that hunts in a pack, flanking the player and jumping out when you least expect it. The Cyst, with its lovely name, is more or less an organic mine that can be used against the enemy if you're quick enough. Then there's the Crawler, which is a horrible little walking bomb that can be used against the enemy if you're good enough. It opens up a few new doors for scares and strategy, which is what new enemies should do for a game like this.

I have always wanted to impale my enemies into walls, or shoot them out into space by breaking pressurisation windows. Can I do this?

Using the new Javelin Gun you can do the former, or you can use the Necromorphs own limbs against them with Isaac's returning kinesis ability. Visceral seemed happy with its impalement technology. As for blowing them "out of the god damn airlock"? It's there, and it's another strategic choice – remember, you can get sucked out into space, too. Be careful.

Dead Space 2 is being developed by Visceral Games. Check out www.deadspace.ea.com for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's *Dead Space 2* – this is a Very Good Thing.
- Sound is being used cleverly once more to terrify and warn players.
- Strategic use of weapons, abilities and space-windows: bliss.
- We should probably mention it looks lovely, too.

READ ME

The 'expanded universe' of *Dead Space* stories will continue with the second game, a novel and other things that haven't been announced yet.



● The Nanosuit 2 in all its heroic, fire-jumping glory.

RELEASE DATE: Q4 2010

Crysis 2

Crytek's Nathan Camarillo talks to Play about the upcoming Crysis 2

Did you always intend to put out a *Crysis* game on console?

I don't think that was the intention – you can look through the public records of Crytek PR and find statements where we said 'this kind of game will never run on console' and 'we're not making it for console'. Then there was the realisation of 'if we don't do it, someone else will'. So that's quite a challenge – who wants to do it? That's what we're all about, challenges. That sparked the goals for CryEngine 3 and getting this kind of game running.

Has the tech had to be scaled back at all?

I wouldn't say scaled back – the technology is scaleable, so it will take advantage of whatever hardware we have available. If you've spent a lot of money on a high-end PC then this is going to scale with that as well. We're not talking about PC specifics just yet, but honestly – our screenshots come from somewhere and they look awesome, so you've got to imagine they're coming from one of the versions of the game. [laughs]

Do you get tired of talking about technology more than the game?

No, not really. Greater technology makes greater games – that's really how we look at it. Our guys are so awesome who work on the engine and in R&D, as well as on the game team. So it's fine to talk about the technology, we're really proud of it. People do really awesome work and the game gets its kudos as well.

Who is the game aimed at?

With *Crysis 2* we really want to open up – *Crysis 1* was really about the hardcore enthusiast PC market just because of the requirements to run the game, so obviously we're broadening the market just by offering it on consoles. But the cool thing about *Crysis* is you can play it like a shooter if you want – you won't get the full experience but you'll still have an awesome time. But the more skill you have, the more you can get out of the game, by exploring all the systemic interactions or customising your weapons or customising your Nanosuit – if you understand these concepts then you realise a much deeper game exists there for you and you'll have much more fun with it.

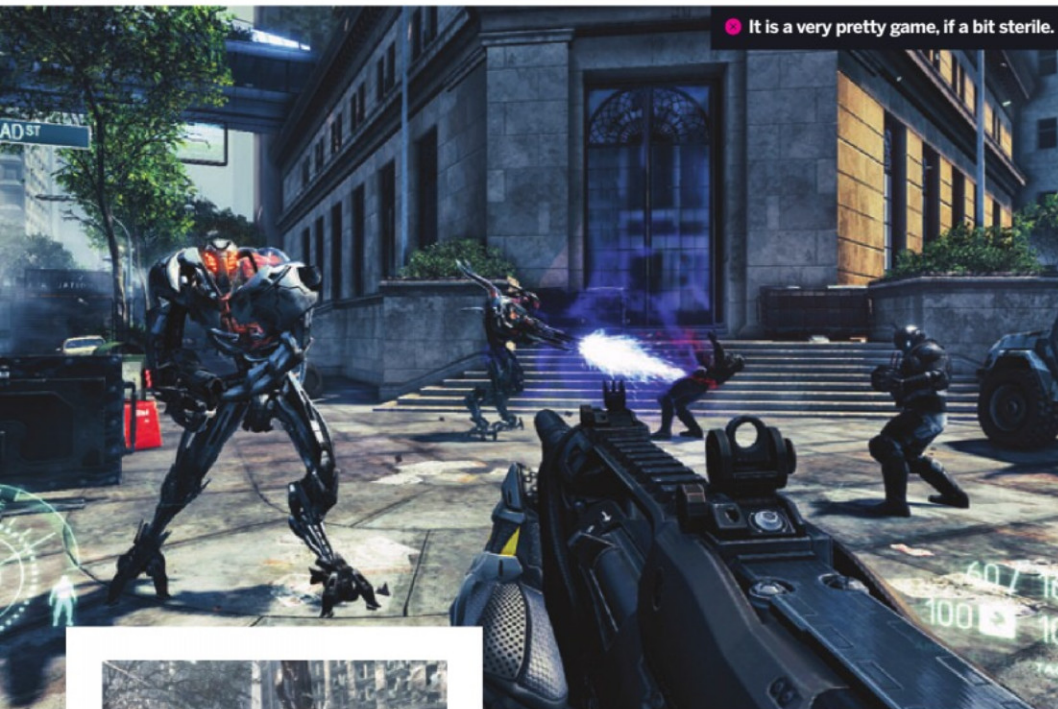
Crysis 2 is being developed by Crytek. Check out www.crynetystems.com for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

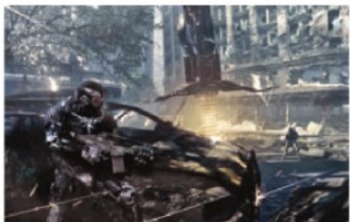
- It still looks superb, even if we aren't surprised by it any more.
- Another entry to the wonderful world of muck about games.
- A more welcoming experience for all, unlike the original PC game.
- Multiplayer by ex-Free Radical should be something impressive.

READ ME

The original *Crysis*, released in 2007 on PC, has been played 'properly' (ie good visual fidelity and full physics engine) by a grand total of zero people on Play.



● It is a very pretty game, if a bit sterile.



I'M LEAVIN'

So what is the crisis in *Crysis*?

CRYSIS 2 IS set in New York, during the aftermath of an alien invasion. It's no stretch to say it looks like we're losing. Players control the Nanosuit 2-sporting Nomad as he goes about his business. This business includes turning invisible before throwing someone off a skyscraper. If you want it to, that is.



PREVIEW



Elvis returns to the casino shows with amplified guitar and football helmet.



If a pal needs help you'll get a message in your game.



RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Dead Rising 2

Two's company, thousands are a horde

Zombies again, yawn...

What do you mean 'yawn'? Zombies are the best thing to happen to videogames. They are the lifeblood of the industry now and *Dead Rising 2* is looking to up the stakes significantly.

The last game sucked and was on Xbox 360, which sucks more.

Well, that's a matter of opinion, but we'd say that *Dead Rising* was a good start for a new franchise with a great open world, excellent gameplay and fun characters. But like we said *Dead Rising 2* takes things so much further.

So what's so special about this one? Zombie showgirls?

There are zombie showgirls actually!

But what's really special about this game is the newly announced two-player co-op, which is drop-in, drop-out for you and a friend to play.

What's with all the silly outfits?

Dressing up in silly clothes is part of the fun of *Dead Rising*. Things get even crazier in this instalment, though, as the pummelling of the undead has been turned into some kind of sport. That means crazy weapons to go with your outfits.

What do you mean?

Well, for a start Chuck Greene, the game's hero, is able to combine objects into inventive killing machines using little more than some sticky

tape. Examples include pitchforks attached to car batteries to electrify them and chainsaws attached to paddles so you can wade through the horde. And every combo you create adds to your Prestige Points so you can level up Chuck and make him a better apocalypse survivor.

If you can do all this why would you need a partner to help?

We can't think of a reason why having a co-op partner play through *Dead Rising 2* with you would make it any less fun.

Dead Rising 2 is being developed by Canadians or more specifically Blue Castle Games. Find out more at www.bluecastlegames.com



Friends who drink together kill zombies together.



GETTING SET

What's *Dead Rising 2* all about then?

CAPCOM HAS FINALLY revealed some of the plot for *Dead Rising 2* as Chuck Greene travels to Fortune City to save his daughter. Katey has been bitten by a zombie and needs the expensive medication Zombrex to stop her from turning. Chuck wants to enter the 'Terror Is Reality' zombie game show so he can afford to help her.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Combine items in the game to create bigger and better zombie slaughter tools.
- Co-op gameplay means friends can drop in and out of your game to assist you.
- Another crazy world to explore with all the madness you would expect of Capcom.
- Thousands of zombies on screen at any one time and chainsaws aplenty.

READ ME

Original game creator Keiji Inafune is still in charge of *Dead Rising 2*, even though it's being developed in Canada.



HANDS-ON

RELEASE DATE: SUMMER

● The game does look very nice.

Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light

Tomb Raider heads in a new direction

It's not a *Tomb Raider* game. But on booting up *Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light* for the first time you're unlikely to have any confusion about the situation. This really is *not* a *Tomb Raider* game. This is a twin-stick shooter from a top-down, isometric viewpoint where Lara Croft teams up with a 2,000-year-old chap called Totec. It's an entirely new direction for the series from an artistic and storyline standpoint.

But that's not to say the game is entirely devoid of tombs and raiding. In fact, it revolves around ancient artefacts, crumbling crypts and everything we'd expect of Lara. Players can even raid extra tombs on the side for bonuses. Coupled with the sheer number of collectables on offer, it looks as though *Guardian Of Light* could have a good deal more scope for replays than you might expect from a downloadable game. The production values of the game are up there with the best of any downloadable titles, and the *Underworld* engine has been put to good use in this incarnation.



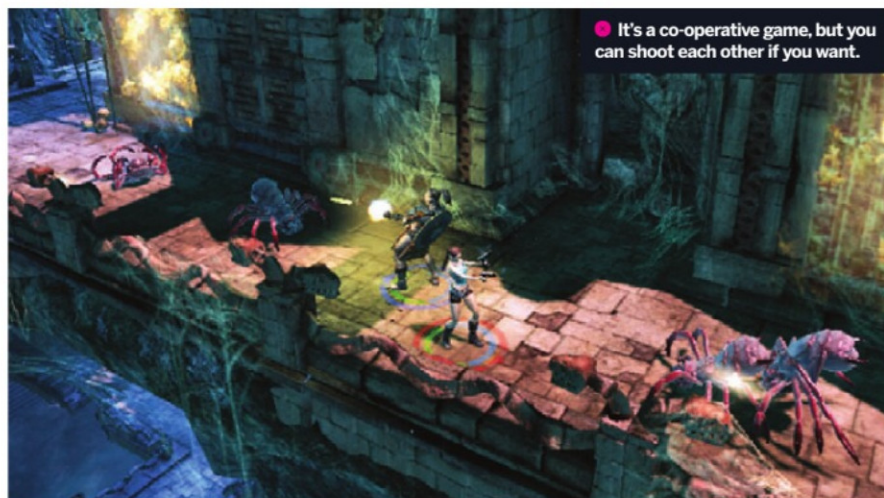
● There will be many classic *Tomb Raider*-y puzzles. But it's not *Tomb Raider*.

From a story perspective there's even more that would be recognisable for long-time fans. A *Mirror Of Smoke* and quests for *Temples Of Light* all point in a familiar direction, so while it may not be a *Tomb Raider* game, *Guardian Of Light* really is a *Tomb Raider* game. If that makes sense. Square Enix is pushing *GOL* in a direction all of its own, with the potential for its own DLC, its own sequels and its own universe to expand on – but by no means is it forgetting who Lara Croft is or what she is meant to represent.

Crystal Dynamics is developing *Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light*. Check out www.laracroftandtheguardianoflight.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A fresh direction for Lara and co could bring a new audience.
- It looks a lot prettier than we expected it to, which is a pleasant surprise.
- Local and online co-op modes should prove to be a lot of fun.
- You can be a bit of a git to your mates with friendly fire off.



● It's a co-operative game, but you can shoot each other if you want.



UPDATE

● Wanzers are technically vehicles not robots, but we like calling them robots.



● They might be expensive technological marvels, but sometimes they fight like they're in a pub brawl.

RELEASE DATE: JULY

Front Mission Evolved

Another reason for mechin'. Whoopee!

To be completely honest, the main reason the **Play** team pays any attention to the *Front Mission* series at all is our puerile sense of humour. If you don't get what we mean, you're either way too mature or perhaps not quite mature enough, but never mind that. We did give it some attention for other reasons once, when *Front Mission 3*, unlike any other game in the series so far, got a European release on the PSone. It was a pretty decent turn-based strategy epic but very few gamers in Europe gave it the time of day so the next two titles in the series never got released in these parts.

Front Mission Evolved, though, is coming out here and it's bringing

with it what Square Enix likes to call an 'evolution', but what a more sober commentator might instead term 'changes'. They're pretty major changes, mind. First, development duties have been shifted not only outside of Square Enix, but outside of Japan, to Californian studio Double Helix Games, which has produced one whole game in its brief history: *G.I. Joe*. Oh dear. We'll try not to hold that against these guys, though, as Double Helix was formed after mergers between a number of other long-running studios, so it does at least have a lot of experienced staff on board.

The other big change is that *Evolved* is an action game not a strategy game, and so plays more like *MechAssault* or *Armored Core Gundam* or something. Less an evolution, more a switch from one well-worn genre to another, but y'know, we'll give it a chance because we actually rather like big, stompy robots. They're nicer than people.



● You can even get out of your wanzers and fight on foot. It's like... *Driver 2*.

Front Mission Evolved is being developed by Double Helix. Check the website for more details: www.doublehelixgames.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- A sort of fresh, sort of new direction for a classic videogame series.
- You can get out of your mech and run around, you brave little soldier.
- Stompy mechanoids are really good for stomping on things.
- Everyone and we mean everyone (in Japan) loves mechs.

PREVIEW

白線ア

LITTLE BLEEDER

The blood, the sweat, the tears

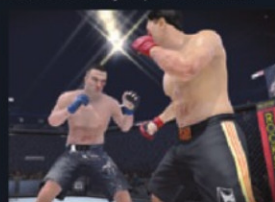


LIQUIDS OF VARIOUS kinds play an important role in MMA. Blood is the best one, and the blood in MMA spills onto both fighters. Sweat is obviously handy because it causes a sort of explosion when someone gets hit in the face. Then there are tears, which haven't been confirmed yet, but we think they'll bring additional layers of realism and sadism to proceedings.

MMA RULES!

Not the goolies!

LONG-TIME MMA fans will no doubt remember that there were almost no rules regarding how you went about hurting your opponent in early MMA competitions. Even low blows weren't necessarily forbidden. Whether there'll be an option to permit such dirty tactics in MMA we don't know, but we certainly hope there will be.



STRIKEFORCE

But not Dynasty Warriors Strikeforce



THE MOST RECOGNISABLE licence in MMA will be Strikeforce, the organisation that is currently the closest thing UFC has to a rival. Strikeforce's roster may not be as packed with big-name fighters as UFC's, but it's made some decent signings recently, including Fedor Emelianenko and Bobby Lashley.

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

EA Sports MMA

Pfff... 'ultimate' is such an overused word these days anyway

It's odd that, while EA still remains among the biggest, richest and most powerful game publishers in the world, it's set itself up as something of an underdog of late. One by one, EA has picked out major franchises held by other companies and made targets of them, ensuring

Redwood City giant has stacked the odds against itself more steeply than ever before.

The practice of mixed martial arts competition has been around for centuries, but MMA as we know it is a relatively new sport, and one dominated by the Ultimate Fighting

Championship, the organisation that has its own deal with THQ and so will *not* be featured in *EA Sports MMA*. So EA, a company used to snapping up all the best sports licences for itself, is going *against*

the series that has exclusive rights to arguably the only licence that really counts. On paper this looks like a very one-sided fight. EA has certainly done everything possible to bulk MMA up, though. Numerous organisations and fighters have been signed up, all with respectable reputations within the MMA world, but to the casual observer it does look a little like a hurriedly cobbled together mishmash of names and brands that most people haven't heard of.

So, if the branding isn't going to sell MMA, perhaps the game will. Given that it's built on the same engine that drives the *Fight Night* series, we can expect MMA

to trump *UFC Undisputed 2010* in terms of polish and visual flair, but *UFC's* fighting mechanics are going to be tough to follow. For our money *UFC 2009's* striking game was superior to *Fight Night Round 4's*, so we'll be wanting much more than a repurposing of *Fight Night's* gameplay with some wrestling tacked on. Fortunately, EA Tiburon is promising that *MMA* is no *Fight Night* spin-off and there's a part of us that feels inclined to root for the underdog here, even if it is one of the largest digital entertainment corporations of all time.

EA Tiburon is developing *MMA*. Check the website for more details: <http://mma.easports.com>

It looks as if EA has stacked the odds against itself more steeply than ever

that no genre and no sector of the market gets monopolised. *Skate* went after *Tony Hawk*, *Dead Space* went after *Resident Evil*, *Dante's Inferno* went after *God Of War* and *Need For Speed* went after *Gran Turismo*. All of these titles have enjoyed success against tough, established competition, if not necessarily at the kind of levels EA has been accustomed to in the past, but with *MMA* it looks as if the

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WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- You can customise the rules so that fights get nastier than in UFC.
- Fighters have different individual styles, not just style types.
- Choice of three, yes three, different ring shapes – square, hexagon and circle.
- The blood goes all over the place, which is what we want to see in a fighting game.

READ ME

EA's bold rival to THQ's licensed *UFC* series incorporates pretty much every *other* MMA fighter, rule set and organisation.

UPDATE

FIRST LOOK



DEFENCE COUNSEL

The art of *not* getting punched



ATTACK ISN'T NECESSARILY the best form of defence in MMA – sometimes defence is the best form of defence. And actual defence comes in a number of forms. There's ducking and weaving, then there's blocking, which involves getting hit, but only on the arms. Then there are parries and counters, which involve turning defence into attack.

THROWING SHAPES

Give yourself a ring



MMA GIVES YOU a choice of ring designs – from the traditional square, to the hexagon and circle – each of which will give fights a tactical flavour. The main difference is how easy it is for one fighter to get pinned against the edge of the ring. Some real-life MMA organisations don't have any physical boundary around the ring, but we can see that might complicate matters from a game design point of view.



RELEASE DATE: AUGUST

Madden NFL 11

We know this much is Drew... Drew Brees

If you're into American football then you will have watched the Super Bowl this year, and if you watch the Super Bowl, you'll understand exactly why Drew Brees was chosen by *Madden NFL* fans as the 'cover athlete' for this year's official NFL game. The New Orleans Saints quarterback put in a close-to-faultless performance, proving instrumental in bringing his team to its first-ever Super Bowl title. What a star.

Now, not only does he get to adorn the game's packaging in all his golden-trousered glory, he also has the honour of being the first player to be pictured in the first screenshots of *Madden NFL 2011*. EA Tiburon has been putting extra effort into the helmet-off likenesses of the players and as you can see, this one's pretty good. Although we'd say the real Drew Brees looks less like Robin Williams than his digital counterpart.

Having fans of the game vote for their favourite cover athlete was a first for the *Madden* series, and EA will be inviting fan contributions in other ways, too. Fans have also had the chance to vote



It may look like Robin Williams but it is in fact cover star Drew Brees.

on which two teams they would like to see featured in the *Madden NFL 2011* demo, and have even been able to vote on what stats they think this year's rookie NFL players should have in the game. Hmm... wonder if we'll be able to vote on *FIFA* stuff this year, too.

Madden NFL 11 is being developed by EA Tiburon. Check the website for more details: www.tiburon.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- The game's cover athlete was decided by democratic vote.
- Stats of rookie players will be influenced by fan ratings.
- Your coach can speak to you through a Bluetooth headset.
- Less mucking about in the playbook, more playing ball.



This move is called 'The Midwife'.

THE LATEST ON... All the latest on the pre-E3 game announcements and updates



SHANK

Publisher: EA Developer: Klei Entertainment
ETA: July Format: PSN

EA WENT ON a little PSN spending spree recently to get hold of *DeathSpank* and *Shank* for digital release. We approve of such moves because *Shank* is one of the best-looking side-scrolling fighters we've seen in recent years. What's more *Shank* has the legendary Marianne Krawczyk writing its story. You don't know who that is? Well, she only wrote *God Of War* for crying out loud. That's a pretty good pedigree by anyone's measure. In-between the story, though, is plenty of knife slashing, chainsaw swinging and gun slinging, which can be chained together to form the kind of flowing and seamless carnage that we might expect from the likes of *Devil May Cry*. You've also got some pretty beefy bosses like the one on the right, who will need a hell of a lot more than fancy knife play to take down. The results can be both gruesome and hilarious, which is exactly the kind of mix we enjoy the most.



BLAZBLUE: CONTINUUM SHIFT

Publisher: TBC Developer: Arc System Works ETA: September Format: PS3

THERE MAY WELL be a big question mark over whether or not this sequel to the recently released *BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger* will make it to the UK, but we would certainly welcome it. It was one of the freshest beat-'em-ups we had seen in a while (actually since *Battle Fantasia*, also made by Arc System) and with some new features being added to the PSP game, we should expect plenty of interesting new content in *Continuum Shift*. All that will be rather dependent on sales on PS3, of course. If those aren't strong then there won't be a sequel for us lot.



ENSLAVED: ODYSSEY TO THE WEST

Publisher: Namco Bandai Developer: Ninja Theory ETA: October Format: PS3

EACH TIME WE get the chance to see *Enslaved* we come away impressed and though we haven't seen it all that often really, it's still a good track record to be building on. Our latest taste of the new game from the maker of *Heavenly Sword* almost literally picked up where we left off last time, with Monkey and Trip attempting to cross a ravine using an old industrial crane (or metal tower as they call it since they have no idea what it is). It was another great section that showed off the stealth mechanics needed to sneak past your enemies, the climbing mechanics and the combat. What it also showed us was a really cool chase sequence that reminded us a lot of the tank chase from *Uncharted 2*. *Enslaved* could well be walking with esteemed company when it arrives later this year.



KINGDOM HEARTS: BIRTH BY SLEEP

Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: Square Enix
ETA: 10 September Format: PSP

This PSP prequel to the original PS2 *Kingdom Hearts* game has been out in Japan since January. Fortunately we'll be able to get our hands on an English translation of this action-RPG. Potentially yet another reason to own a PSP.



ACE COMBAT: JOINT ASSAULT

Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Namco Bandai
ETA: July Format: PSP

The flight-combat genre is one that tends to get us a bit confused. We don't get that excited about them, but once we play them we always come around. *Joint Assault* is looking like fun and the addition of co-op should make it even better.



DC UNIVERSE ONLINE

Publisher: Sony **Developer:** Sony
ETA: September **Format:** PS3

BELIEVE IT OR not but *DC Universe* is still coming out. Really. It's not a game we come into much contact with, but Sony's online development team keeps posting up updates of how the game is developing and all the new characters from DC's legendary catalogue that have joined the fray. More recent additions have included the likes of Nightwing (ex-Robin Dick Grayson don't you know), Green Lantern and Power Girl. Given the huge number of characters to choose from Sony has only scratched the surface so far, but then *DC Universe Online* is an MMO where you create your own superhero persona, so by the end there will be even more heroes around. And best of all the drawing genius that is Jim Lee continues to work on the game. Clearly *DC Universe* has bags full of win.



THE WITCHER 2: ASSASSINS OF KINGS

Publisher: Namco Bandai **Developer:** CD Projekt Red Studio **ETA:** 2011 **Format:** PS3

WE WERE PROMISED a console version of *The Witcher* once before, so we're not going to get too far ahead of ourselves, but the latest word is that *The Witcher 2* could be making its way to the PS3. How do we know this? Well, CD Projekt told us so, as the currently PC-only game could easily make the leap to consoles and is already optimised for use with a pad rather than a mouse and keyboard.

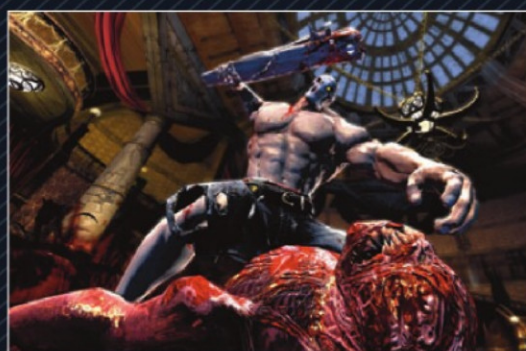
We really missed out on *The Witcher*, too, as it has been hailed as one of the great RPGs of recent years and this sequel looks very likely to build on that legacy. Dialogue is going to have a much bigger impact on the plot, your AI partners will be getting even more involved combat and the world will be as corrupt and enticing as ever. No more collectable sex cards, though. If you don't know what we mean by that, then it's probably best not to ask.



TOM CLANCY'S H.A.W.X. 2

Publisher: Ubisoft **Developer:** Ubisoft Bucharest **ETA:** September **Format:** PS3

WITH THE FIRST game selling over 1 million copies it's no surprise to see *Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.* take another stab at the PS3. The first game took us by surprise, turning out to be much better than we expected and so we're expecting even more great things from this sequel. Apparently *H.A.W.X. 2* will more directly reference Clancy's books (he never actually created *H.A.W.X.*, it's just set in his universe) so there could be some nods to other games you've played before. Voice commands were talked about last time around, so we're interested to see if that happens, too.



SPLATTERHOUSE

Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: BottleRocket
ETA: October **Format:** PS3

It's nice when a game does exactly what it says on the tin and if there's a house with more splatter than the one in this game then we'd be amazed. This homage to the Eighties arcade game has 3D hacking and slashing as well as some nice 2D platform sections.



GOD EATER

Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Namco Bandai
ETA: September **Format:** PSP

God Eater has been compared not at all unfavourably with Capcom monster hit, er, *Monster Hunter*. It's an action adventure game where you go around hitting huge monsters in the face with a sword that's at least twice as big as you are. Sounds like fun to us.



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Requirements: Apple iPhone 3G, 3Gs, iPod Touch or iPad >> iPhone 3.1.2 or higher >> an Internet connection

REVIEWS

Playing bad games so you don't have to



Ian Dransfield

Reviewed: *Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands*

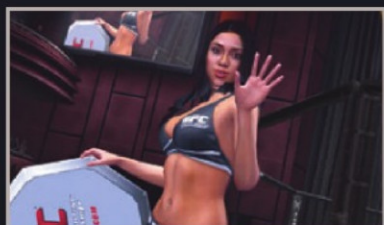
Ian and his mates from Oop North are having a group summer holiday this year. Ian's not happy, though, as the planned destination is Bournemouth, where he lives. We don't know what he's complaining about, he's too skint to go on holiday anywhere else anyway. If you'd like to donate to the Save The Ian fund, please send a cheque to the usual address.

currently playing: *Final Fantasy XIII*

on review



82 Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker psp
Snake handler



86 UFC Undisputed 2010 ps3
Bird watcher



90 Red Dead Redemption ps3
Horse wrangler

the rest

- 78 Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands** ps3
- 84 Alpha Protocol** ps3
- 88 Blur** ps3
- 92 Yakuza 4** ps3
- 94 Demon's Souls** ps3
- 95 Iron Man 2** ps3
- 95 Clash Of The Titans: The Video Game** ps3
- 96 SBK X: Superbike World Championship** ps3
- 97 Backbreaker** ps3
- 98 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa** psp
- 98 ModNation Racers** psp



**Ashley Day****Reviewed:** *Alpha Protocol*

Ash went to a wedding reception where the DJ played no Iron Maiden. The closest he got was Def Leppard, but even that got stopped halfway through because Def Leppard are rubbish. That was the low point of his month until Ronnie James Dio died, at which point it got worse. He bought a Tenacious D album to mark Dio's passing then realised he had no money and sold a bunch of games.

currently playing: *Split/Second: Velocity*

**Chris McMahon****Reviewed:** *2010 FIFA World Cup, ModNation Racers*

This month, in a shock development, Chris got drunk. Once drunk he got a bit warm, so he went down to the sea for a paddle, which became a full-scale dip. In his pants. He described the experience as "amazing", but he was a bit chilly afterwards, so he caught a cab home. In his pants. The driver barely noticed. They get a lot of that in Bournemouth.

currently playing: *Red Dead Redemption (in his pants)*

**Dave Shaw****Reviewed:** *SBKX*

Dave has spent most of the month cutting up carpet and painting the walls of his home pink. He says it's puce, but we know puce when we see it. We haven't seen it, mind you, but that's beside the point, the point being that we know pink when Dave 'Pink Walls'.

Shaw flatly denies it. Dave has also become a vigilante this month, chasing 'thugs' from off of his roof.

currently playing: *2010 FIFA World Cup*



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands

It's not a film tie-in, it's just a coincidence

**DETAILS**

Publisher
Ubisoft
Developer
Ubisoft Montreal
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action-adventure
Supports
720p, Downloadable content, DualShock 3
Age Rating
16
Website
www.princeofpersiagame.com

We should clear things up straight away: *Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands* is not a movie tie-in. It just so happens that a movie based on the *Prince Of Persia* series is coming to theatres near you™ just a week or two after the game is released. So while it may not be a film-o-game, it is a *massively coincidental* game, especially as it seemed to pop up out of nowhere and had its development completed in what seemed like a very short time. But this isn't something to colour our judgement with – what is something to colour our judgement with is the fact that

The Forgotten Sands displays a crushing lack of ambition. While the game does have hints of greatness here and there, it ultimately flounders and ends up safely within the confines of absolute mediocrity. Never fear, though, for we will qualify these statements in the following text, so you know exactly why the game gave us hope, lifted us up and eventually let us down.

TFS bridges the gap between *The Sands Of Time* (92%, **Play** 110) and *Warrior Within* (93%, **Play** 123), telling the story of the Prince's visit to his brother's kingdom. On arriving at the familial abode he discovers it is under attack, and rushes to aid his brother – safe to say some

things happen, ancient seals are broken and an evil is released, transforming most of the people in the kingdom to sand, releasing evil sand skeleton things and leaving the Prince and his sibling relatively unharmed. The game then attempts to cram in sections of exposition that are some of the most easily ignorable storyline elements we've seen in recent games: to say the narrative is predictable is to say *Peggle* is addictive and the Pope is Catholic. 'Obvious' doesn't cover it. It

Combat is stilted, clumsy and overly simple, requiring little more than hammering  until you win

isn't too harmful to the experience, but when you look at the game as a whole it's easy to see the story as just another lazy, uninspired element in the package.

From a mechanics perspective, the basic elements are there: running, jumping, combat, rewinding time and puzzles. But that's as far as it really goes – things are *there*, nothing is *special*. Rather than just accept it, you actually start to question game logic – like why switches are located ten metres up a wall – and *The Forgotten Sands* never manages to really find a consistent, flowing feel like previous games in the series. For one thing, it's just not smooth enough, with elements like



➤ basic animations looking wooden at times. It doesn't even look that great, with a stylised, almost cartoony look that arguably wouldn't be out of place on a high-quality PS2 game.

One of the main – if not *the* main – sticking points of *TFS* is combat. In *The Sands Of Time* (released in 2003 and re-tested for the purpose of offering balanced judgement in this review) combat is smooth, flowing and tactical, offering numerous ways in which to dispatch enemies and a subtle undertone of intelligence to the battling scenarios. Even seven years later it's still a robust system that works very well and is complementary to the acrobatics that go on elsewhere.

But combat this time around is stilted, clumsy and overly simple, requiring little more than hammering **Ⓢ** until you win, with the odd dodge thrown in for good measure. There are aggressive magical powers available, as well as 'crowd control' abilities like jumping on the heads of enemies and wading over them, but when there's no real need to use these powers a lot of players are unlikely to put them into play. From the start to the end of the game – all six or so hours of it – you will use a selection of two strategies to defeat enemies: the 'Dynasty Warriors Technique' (mash one button) or the 'Verging On Strategic Technique' (dodge the attacks of bigger enemies before reverting to the DWT). As combat makes up such a big part of the game, it's hard to feel anything other than hugely disappointed by how poor it is – if they got it right seven years ago, why is it so

PRATTITUDE That's 'the attitude of a prat'



the second he shouted 'BITCH' a lot and looked a bit 'emo'. It's no surprise then, that *TFS* shows the Prince in a transient part of his attitude era, making snarky comments but retaining an air of classiness.

MUCH WAS MADE back in the day of the Prince's change between *The Sands Of Time* and *Warrior Within*. In the first game he was polite, well-spoken and princely. In

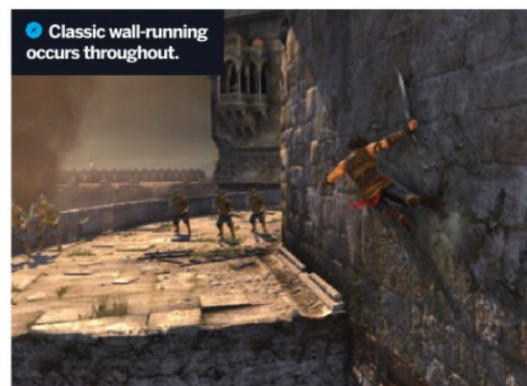
The story goes some way to explaining his darker demeanour in (chronologically) later games, but all in all he just comes across as an irritating, wannabe-funny twit.



• The Prince can upgrade his magical abilities.



• Kill moves don't stop enemies from attacking you, which is nonsense.



• Classic wall-running occurs throughout.

cack now? The fact that there is an astonishing lack of variety in enemy types – to the point that two boss battles play

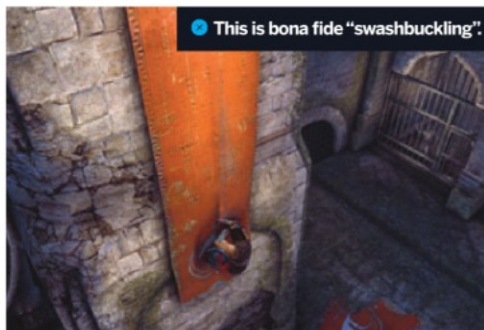
out in *exactly the same way as fights with standard large enemies* – only exacerbates what is already a very irritating issue. This is before we've even mentioned the dodgy auto-targeting, which makes you feel like battles are being conducted by an unruly autopilot rather than the player. Throw into this menagerie of confused mediocrity the fact that the game seems to rely on throwing masses of boring enemies at you rather than having faith in clever enemy design and you

The excitement and interest doesn't hold – the game settles back into basic, predictable structures

have a pretty complete list of what annoyed us about one of *TFS*'s major elements.

The other major bugbear comes in the shape of how 'boxy' the game feels. You never feel as if you have full control of the Prince, and everything feels as though it is being conducted on square tiles. Try to jump at an angle and you will fail – only straight jumps work – try running in a circle and everything will look distinctly angular and stop-start – certainly not as smooth as *The Sands Of Time*. It may seem like your classic mountain/molehill situation here, but these issues undermine the basic experience of a *Prince Of Persia* game. He's meant to be acrobatic, not like a robot, and the player is meant to feel in control of him, not like they are just pushing buttons *only when they should*.

It isn't eminently dislikeable and there were some sections of the game in which we had a lot of fun. The slow start is soon forgotten as you pick up the numerous

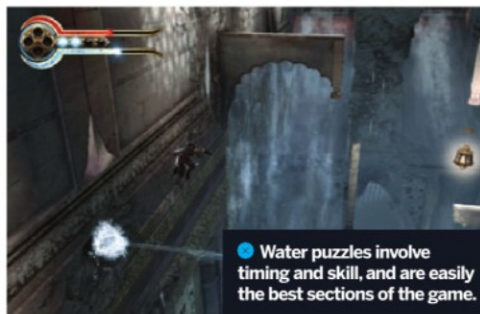


• This is bona fide "swashbuckling".

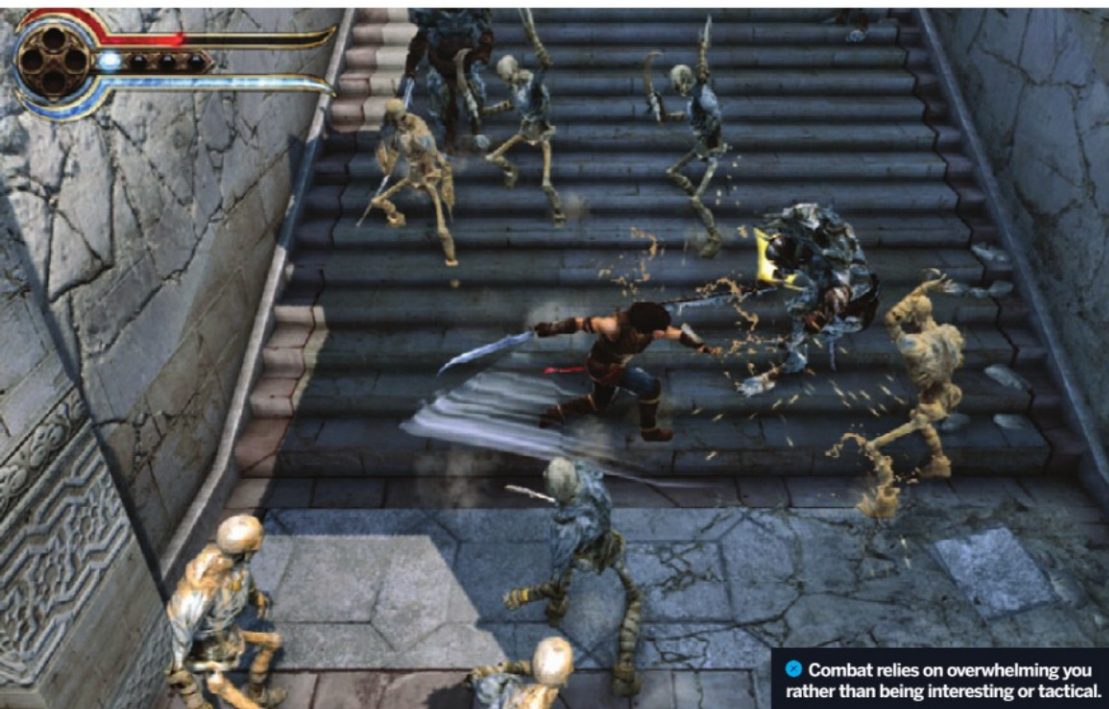




● Moments like this – classic POP gaming – don't happen often enough.



● Water puzzles involve timing and skill, and are easily the best sections of the game.



● Combat relies on overwhelming you rather than being interesting or tactical.

element-controlling powers the Prince gets a hold of. The ability to stop water, thus making it solid and climbable, opens up a plethora of interesting – and fun – platforming puzzles, involving careful timing and a reasonable amount of skill. The same can be said of the other powers unlocked as you progress, though to varying degrees. The super-jump, for example, feels a bit contrived at the best of times, whereas the memory power that arrives late in the game is almost as good as the water-controlling power. When *TFS* gets things right, it gets them very right – there are fine, flowing acrobatic sections that will impress you as much as they make you smile and genuinely hark back to the days of the classic *POP* trilogy on PS2. Also, while it may be a bit of a push to admit it, the more casual-game-buying public will definitely get something out of this – it's quite easy, short and has a similar name to a Disney film out around the same time (but it's not a tie-in). It may well be that for all of our negativity the game just isn't aimed at us – maybe.

There is good in this game – we felt it from the start, just as Luke Skywalker felt it in Darth Vader. Unfortunately, the Prince's

reparations – unlike Vader's – never come. But while it lasted, we genuinely enjoyed what we were playing and it's a good sign that when the developer put its mind to it *The Forgotten Sands* is a genuinely exciting, interesting and reasonably innovative action puzzler. But the excitement and interest doesn't hold, the game settles back into basic, predictable structures of platform puzzling and the end of the game is overwhelmed with more irritating, poor combat. There's an inkling of something great hoping to burst out of *The Forgotten Sands*, but as it stands we have nothing more than a mediocre title: insultingly simple at times, cynical, lazy in its execution, with a distinct feeling of being rushed and worth very little of your time and attention.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

The Forgotten Sands hints at something special, only to lose itself in mediocrity. The middle third is worth playing; the rest is lazy, forgettable nonsense that is much worse than the seven-year-old Sands Of Time.

68%

In this series

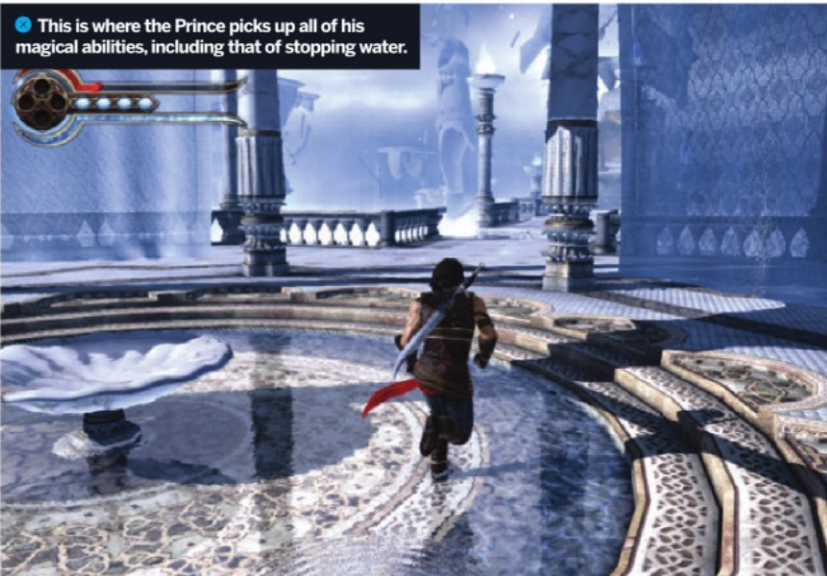
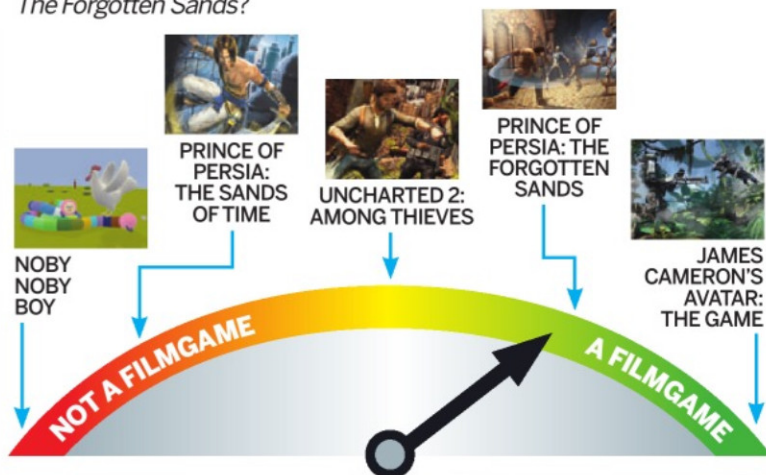


Prince Of Persia Issue 174
A divisive entry to the series, but we liked it. 83%

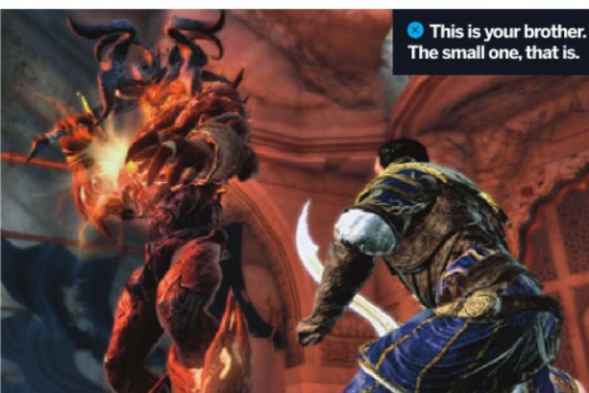
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands

IT'S THE [NOT]AFILMGAME-O-METER!

In the grand scheme of things, how much like a filmgame is *The Forgotten Sands*?



● This is where the Prince picks up all of his magical abilities, including that of stopping water.



● This is your brother. The small one, that is.



● The water-stopping ability is explored in the most interesting fashion. Other powers fall by the wayside.



RELEASE DATE: 18 JUNE

Shoot them in the face with the tranquilizer gun, otherwise you risk being discovered.



Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker



DETAILS

Publisher

Konami

Developer

Kojima Productions

Price

£29.99

Players

1-6

Genre

Stealth

Supports

Ad-hoc Wi-Fi

Multiplayer, TV In/Out

Age Rating

15

Website

www.konami.jp/mgs_pw/en/index.html

“Peace is an unnatural state for human society,” apparently

In short: it is a proper *Metal Gear Solid* game. It's canonical, set between *MGS 1* and *MGS 3* chronologically and telling the tale of how Snake became Big Boss. It's pared down in certain ways so it fits the handheld mould, taking cues from *Portable Ops* with shorter missions and recruits. Cut-scenes are still long and verbose. It's also playable by up to four players co-operatively (six competitively) should you be able to find any friends with PSPs and copies of the game. And it's utterly amazing. With the simple bits out of the way, let's get down to more detail.

Peace Walker picks up in 1974 and continues to follow the exploits of Naked Snake as he grows his merry band of mercenaries, Militaires Sans Frontieres (which is the precursor to Big Boss's Outer Heaven). Costa Rica is under threat from a group of nefarious types who hope to show the world their powers of nuclear deterrence by nuking somewhere, and it just so happens the nuke will be launched from a giant, walking nuke-lobber that Snake immediately christens 'METAL GEEEEEAR'. The story is an

MGS story. That in itself is all the description you need – it's a world unto itself of hyper-explanatory scenes of dialogue, preposterous philosophising and an overarching message that 'nukes are bad'. And it's bloody wonderful. Ludicrous, poorly written and questionably voice acted – but bloody wonderful. It's a bit unfair on every other game that we will mark them down for being like this, but *MGS* really does just have its own way of going about things and it's all the better for it. Plus you can skip the well-animated cut-scenes if you want, so it's not all bad.

The game itself follows the traditional *MGS* template and elements from *Portable Ops*. Missions are divided up individually and are short, ranging from a couple of minutes for some 'extra ops' to 15 minutes or so for the bigger story missions and boss battles. All in all it makes perfect sense, both for the fact that you're playing it on a handheld and so might be on a bus, needing a game that doesn't take up all your time, and because you're encouraged

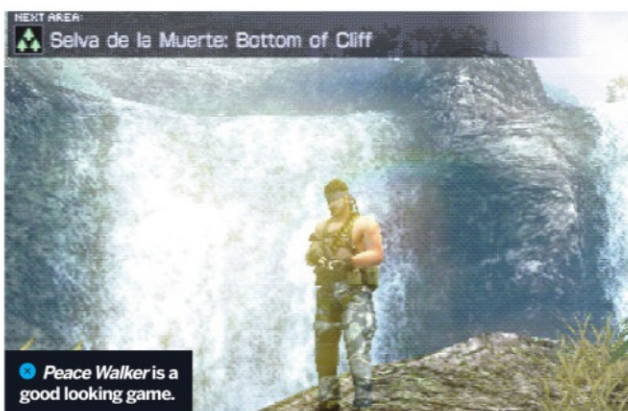
to play with friends and it's easier for everyone to get involved if it's a dip-in, dip-out mission structure. You need friends with PSPs and the game for that, though, as we said.

SNAKE (and the other troops) operate as you'd expect, choking, stunning and sometimes killing. All the gadgets you might want to play about with are present and correct. Technologies can be researched and upgraded at the home base, using troops you

It's bloody wonderful. Ludicrous and poorly written – but bloody wonderful

recruit, rescue or capture to do the work for you (see Hired Guns boxout). As the game progresses you will battle tanks, choppers and massive AI-controlled mechs – which can be destroyed or captured, and then incorporated into your military business. You even get to build your own METAL GEEEEEAR, named Zeke. You're still being given new features ten hours in and the integration between single and co-op never makes you feel like you're missing out by playing alone. It really is a fantastic package, deeper than it has any right to be and compulsive for as long as you play it.

Aside from the love them or hate them cut-scenes, there are issues. The main one is controls, which, while the game goes out of its way to accommodate the player, could still be seen as wanting. They're easy to get used to, mind, but the inevitable hand cramp ruins the experience a bit – though to be fair that's the fault of the PSP, not the game. Aside from that there are some minor issues, like the fact the animation when Snake is hit is really long and unbreakable, and that your super-soldiers



Or you
could try



Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops Issue 150
The first proper *Metal Gear Solid* game on PSP – no card decks in sight. **90%**

PSP



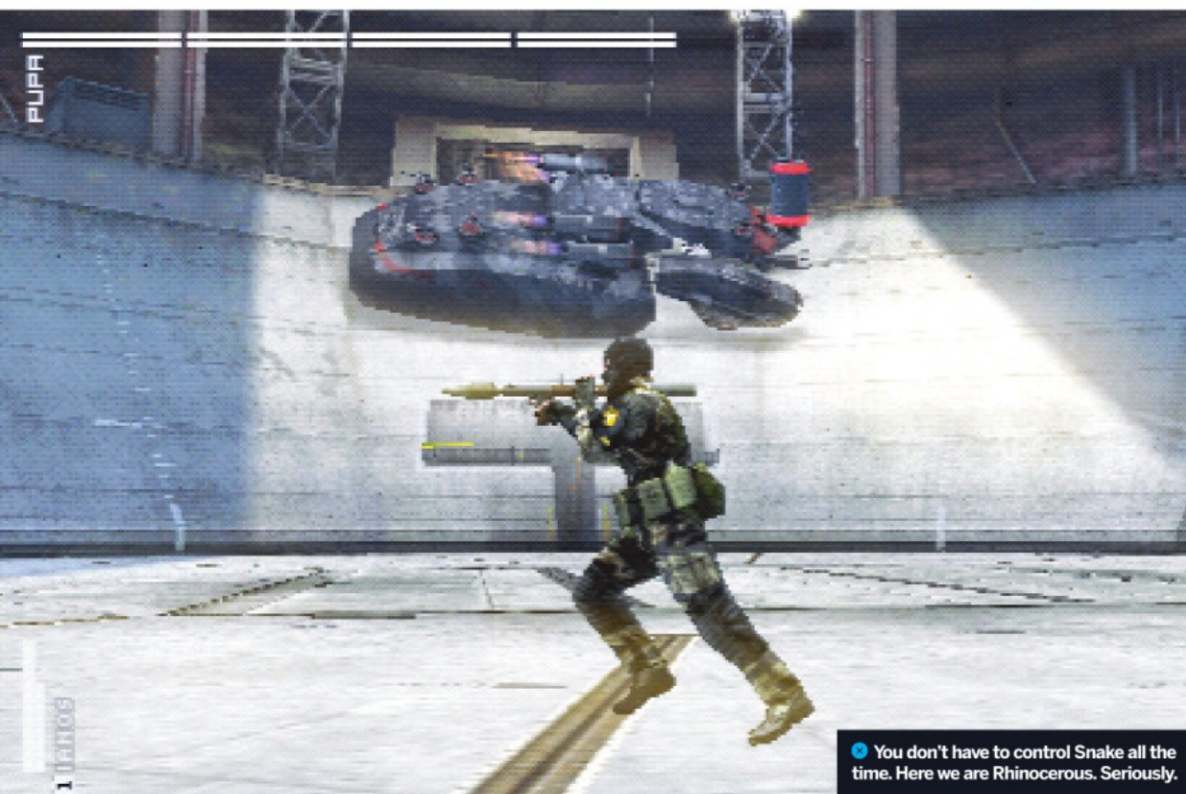
HIRED GUNS

Tactical Espionage Management

MILITAIRES SANS FRONTIERES isn't a pre-made band of mercenaries ready to do your bidding. Snake (and others) must go out and forcefully recruit new comrades, rescue them in side missions or swap them with other players. Once in the fold they can be put to work in a number of different departments, like combat or R&D. Each contributes statistically to the overall goals of the unit – researching



new technologies, being sent out on missions and even making food for the troops. It's a neat feature that keeps you coming back for more. And we recruited Hideo Kojima.



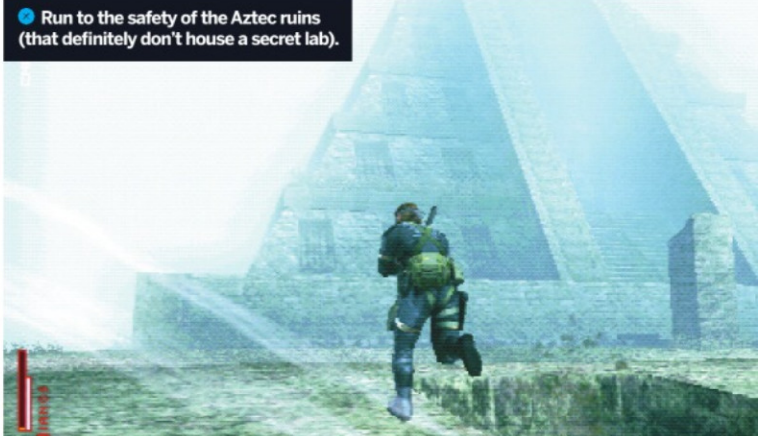
▶ The animated cut-scenes are really pretty.



▶ Ah. That's a big robo-chap.



▶ Run to the safety of the Aztec ruins (that definitely don't house a secret lab).



can't climb walls on their own. Not game-breakers, but annoyances nonetheless.

Even without friends *Peace Walker* is an excellent game, well worth picking up by anyone who's ever had interest in the adventures of Snake. It could so easily have been a lesser game, held back by technological limitations or a lack of ambition – but it isn't. This is the kind of game that the PSP hasn't seen nearly enough of: it's perfect for the handheld, takes advantage of its features and is constructed with real care and attention. Oh, and it's a really good game to boot. Dust off your PSP to pick this up – you won't regret it. Aside from the hand cramp.

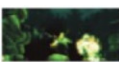
Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

More of a 'real' *Metal Gear Solid* game than it has any right to be, *Peace Walker* is a masterclass in how to make a game truly suited to the PSP. Two thumbs up.

92%

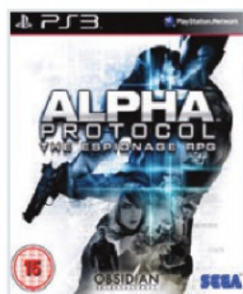


In this series |  **Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence** Issue 145
 One of the PlayStation 2's truly great games and a magnificent package. 94%

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Alpha Protocol

Obsidian shakes and stirs up the RPG genre. But is it all for the better?



DETAILS

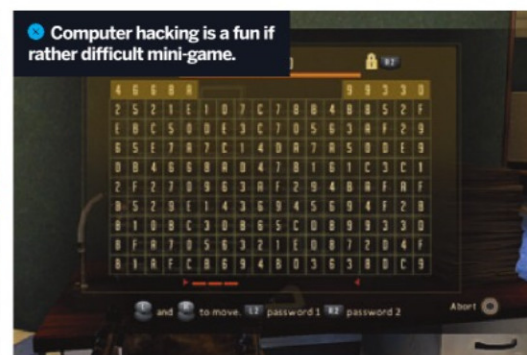
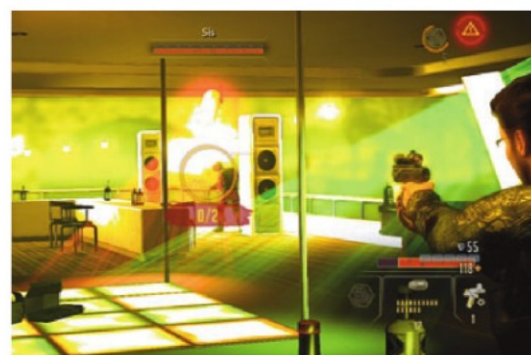
Publisher
Sega
Developer
Obsidian Entertainment
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Action-RPG
Supports
1080i, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
15
Website
www.alphaprotocol.com

Western-developed RPGs are well known, in comparison to their Japanese counterparts, for the freedom of choice they offer those who enter into their worlds. But for many years, the people buying those RPGs have really been presented with just one choice – science fiction or fantasy.

The essence of any RPG is in the player's ability to customise a character to their own liking and move that character through a compelling world and story, so there's no good reason why it should be confined to just two generic settings. Which is something that well-respected developer Obsidian hopes to capitalise on with *Alpha Protocol*, an RPG spy thriller that is really like no other role-playing game you've played before.

This is so true, in fact, that the first couple of hours of *Alpha Protocol* don't even feel like an RPG at all. After a brief series of tutorials, you, as secret agent Michael Thorton, are dropped straight into an extensive mission in Saudi Arabia where a combination of stealth and cover-shooting mechanics come together against a militaristic backdrop more commonly seen in the likes of *Modern Warfare* or *Metal Gear Solid*.

We know *Alpha Protocol* promised a change from other RPGs but this early in the game you get the feeling that Obsidian might have thrown the baby out with the bath water. Moving from mission to mission, stopping only briefly to upgrade weapons from the comfort of your safe house, there's little here to distinguish the experience from a standard stealth shooter. Give Thorton's adventure the



benefit of the doubt, however, and it soon opens up into much more familiar RPG territory.

Jetting around the world, you're free to choose the order in which each mission is tackled. More than just a custom playlist of levels, this choice has massive repercussions for the rest of the game. Success in one endeavour could net you an indispensable ally for later assaults. Discover information in one battlefield and it could lead to intel that makes another easier. And with some missions appearing or disappearing from the map in accordance with decisions made, it's a reckless player that doesn't think twice before deciding on each course of action.

Despite initially feeling like a fairly standard shooter, *Alpha Protocol* features a wide variety of mission types encompassing different sorts of gameplay. There are full-on battles,

A very different, innovative RPG, Alpha Protocol is essential gaming

complete with action-packed set pieces. But you'll also find recon operations, light on confrontation and heavy on technical skills such as computer hacking and lock-picking – all driven by *BioShock*-style mini-games that can be made easier or more difficult according to how Thorton is levelled up or equipped. And then there are the conversations...

Often taking place at the conclusion of an operation and occasionally comprising a non-violent mission in their own right, conversations are a pivotal part of *Alpha Protocol*; their decisions affecting not only the flow of the story but also friends and enemies made. And if Thorton has a wide array of weapons and tech at his command, then he also has an equally diverse command of the English language. Much has been made of his



To deactivate alarms you must solve a series of mazes in sequence and within a time-limit.





✓ Much of the interaction with your team-mates is done via video link.



SPEAKEASY

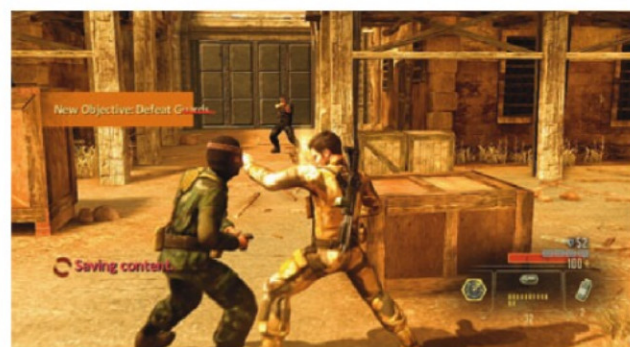
Why can't we just talk it over?

AT CERTAIN POINTS, Thorton goes on missions that are purely dialogue based. As well as being a nice change of pace from the action, these scenes move the story on nicely and are pivotal moments in the plot. There are always several different routes

through every conversation in the game, and many junctions leading to consequences we don't even know about. Some outcomes are better than others and can lead to characters joining your cause as well as statistical bonuses should you handle yourself particularly well.



✓ You can hurt and even kill innocent people if you like. Let key characters witness it, however, and you risk lowering your reputation with them.



ability to channel the three JB's – Jason Bourne, James Bond and Jack Bauer – through his range of dialogue options comprising suave, aggressive and pragmatic. But Thorton's dialogue options are less about the kind of character you want to play and more about what response the situation demands, which really does make *Alpha Protocol* different to the usual sort of Western RPG.

This is a spy fiction thriller, after all, and a good spy must adopt a chameleonic personality if he is to talk his way out of a situation. It's for this reason that *Alpha Protocol* ditches the good/bad morality meter so common in other RPGs and instead places a reputation statistic on every character that Thorton meets. As your reputation rises with certain people, you gain unique statistical modifiers in combat, earn the right to call upon the help of your allies, form romantic connections and even affect major junctions in the plot, including the ending. Knowing the right thing to say is therefore paramount, which

means that you'll have to pay close attention to each character and get to know them in the way you would a real acquaintance, learning what makes them tick and, crucially, what doesn't.

Such complex and consequential factors are what make *Alpha Protocol* a hugely progressive and interesting RPG. And though it sacrifices some genre staples, such as open-world exploration, in the pursuit of its new approach to role-playing, those sacrifices are outweighed by the gains. A very different, innovative RPG, *Alpha Protocol* is essential gaming for anyone willing to put their pre-conceptions aside and have fun with a new type of RPG on its own terms.

Ashley Day

VERDICT

A change of theme, to the spy genre, makes *Alpha Protocol* a refreshing take on the Western RPG. But it's the innovations and advancements that most impress here.

83%

PS3

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

UFC Undisputed 2010

Two steps forward, one step back



DETAILS

Publisher
THQ
Developer
Yuke's
Price
£49.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Sports
Supports
720p, PlayStation
Network, Downloadable
content, DualShock 3,
Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
15
Website
www.ufcundisputed.
com

When you commit yourself to the yearly iteration of a franchise you're asking for people to compare each title very closely with the one that comes before. In the case of Yuke's other big licence, *WWE*, that hasn't always been to the series' benefit. While small improvements are made year on year there is rarely any sense of a quantum shift in mechanics, style or content. *UFC Undisputed 2010* is in similarly dangerous territory, saved only by the fact that the template created last year remains strong enough to keep things entertaining even if it feels like you're repeating yourself.

As much as *UFC Undisputed 2009* was received warmly both critically and commercially, it was not without its faults. These didn't all come to light at first, but its limitations soon began to rise to the surface. In many cases, and to *UFC 2010*'s great credit, these issues have been addressed, but there are still more than enough annoyances to keep us from seeing the best this licence has to offer. Last year's game held great promise as well as being very playable. This year's version is still playable,

broader in its scope, but still far too much promise and not enough execution.

Where this is most apparent is in the career mode, an area that received the bulk of the criticism last time out. Character creation in this mode is much more detailed now with a wider variety of body types, sliders for adjusting various parts of the face and plenty of weird and wonderful hair styles and beards that can be made any colour you like. It's great to be given access to all of that, but when it's presented to you in a menu system that rivals even *SmackDown! Vs Raw* in its complexity and is about as user-friendly as a remote control strapped to

an angry chicken that kind of negates things a little. Yuke's just doesn't seem all that great with menus and that may not seem like the most important thing in the world, but first impressions count and navigating a game shouldn't have to be hard work.

That's only shown up further after your fighter is done and you're ready to make your way onto the circuit. There's more of a story pasted into career now, which is great.

It needed some more connecting threads to keep the game moving. You're no longer restricted to a defined combination of two fighting styles now either, as you have the ability to mix and match the moves you want by going to dedicated training camps in different disciplines to 'purchase' the moves you want. That's not only much more interesting from a player perspective, but also more realistic. It does, however, demand a certain amount of foreknowledge of what all these moves mean and how they can

Still far too much promise and not enough execution

be applied. A 'Superman Punch' is self-explanatory, but what about special guard changes? Do you know why those would be important? It would have been handy in these situations to have your in-game coach guide you through the system and make recommendations, but this doesn't happen.

It would also have been handy for him to talk us through the general training and sparring schemes, which are perhaps even

THE REAL DEAL

UFC novice? Watch the vids

LAST YEAR'S GAME had the excellent classic fights mode that gave you a look at some of the greatest match-ups in UFC history and the good news is that the mode returns. Better news is that the PS3 gets a batch of exclusive, HD videos of full-length fights with all the build-up footage

and commentary. If you're new to UFC and MMA these are ideal for learning about the importance of the smaller features of the sport. It also adds more gravity to the game as a whole as you begin to understand the weight of importance and expectation on every fight.



The Full Mount is still the most dangerous position in the game.





Submissions feel even tougher at times, but their presentation is much improved.



Specialist training camps will teach you new moves and finishing strikes.



It's a clash of UFC titans as Liddell and Jackson go toe to toe.

more frustrating than last year's. The stat decaying system that sees you lose training points (strength, speed and cardio) and skill points (your specific offence and defence stats) if you don't train and spar regularly. That would be all well and good, but when you're losing points because you're resting and having to balance fatigue and potential injury against your development it can feel like you're being punished for not knowing enough. Some coaching pointers above and beyond 'you're doing it wrong' would have been appreciated here, as would a more structured, almost auto-develop option to playing through the career.

These frustrations are made all the more significant when you consider how good this game can be at times. All the things that made it great last year, such as its physics, presentation and mechanics have all been developed and improved. Things such as the Sway System that allows you to dodge and throw punches more fluidly, the contact between limbs when fighters attack simultaneously and the way combos can be made more seamlessly are all excellent.

Likewise the whole game feels richer thanks to less nu-metal and more time presenting fights. Event mode even has little promo videos with the fighters on the main card of the evening (that you create) smack talking about what's to come. It's all good stuff.

However, it does not add up to significant improvement on the original and most of what Yuke's has done is simply fix issues that were either overly confusing or overly simplistic first time around. It may seem unfairly demanding to expect more from *UFC Undisputed 2010*, but unless you're a really big fan of mixed martial arts and the UFC you're going to have trouble noticing the differences between this game and the last.

Jon Gordon

VERDICT

Another fine game from Yuke's, but with limited improvements on the last game and some added frustrations. If you didn't pick up the last one or are a big UFC fan then it's still absolutely worth your time and money.

88%



The dreaded wall of stats is a depressing place to be, especially as things fall.

STAT	POINTS	SKILL LEVEL
STANDING STRIKES OFFENSE	87	37
STANDING STRIKES DEFENSE	80	30
STANDING KICKS OFFENSE	33	11
STANDING KICKS DEFENSE	20	0
CLINCH STRIKING OFFENSE	35	35
CLINCH STRIKING DEFENSE	20	0
GROUND STRIKING OFFENSE	11	11
GROUND STRIKING DEFENSE	20	0
CLINCH GRAPPLE OFFENSE	12	12
CLINCH GRAPPLE DEFENSE	10	10
TAKEDOWN OFFENSE	14	14
TAKEDOWN DEFENSE	20	0
GROUND GRAPPLE OFFENSE	18	18
GROUND GRAPPLE DEFENSE	20	0
SUBMISSION OFFENSE	10	10
SUBMISSION DEFENSE	20	0



Previously... in Play

PREVIEWED Issue 190
"Given our initial look at the new build of *UFC*, we have every confidence it can succeed."

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Blur

Twin airbags, power steering, air con and homing missiles fitted as standard



DETAILS

Publisher
Activision
Developer
Bizarre Creations
Price
£49.99
Players
1-20
Genre
Racing
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network,
Downloadable content,
DualShock 3, Dolby
Digital 5.1
Age Rating
7
Website
www.blurgame.com

Is it better than *Split/Second*? That's what you want to know, right? Two powered-up arcade racing games coming out just a week apart and there can be only one

winner! Well, that's an exciting way to look at it, we suppose, but actually there can be, and are, two winners. Both games are excellent and they're different enough that we'd recommend getting both. And if you really must only buy one, don't go for *Split/Second* just because we gave it a higher score. Yes, on balance *Blur* is the slightly less awesome of the two, but it's a very close call and ultimately more a matter of preference than anything else. So, why might you prefer *Blur*?

Well, generally speaking *Blur* requires more skill and more thought. We love the way *Split/Second* demands that you *don't* think, but we also love how *Blur* requires a surprisingly tactical, multi-faceted style of play. There's not a huge number of power-ups, just eight in all, but they're all very well designed and balanced to the extent that there isn't a clear best one or clear worst one. Any one of them can be a godsend under the right circumstances. Plus you can hold up to three at once and use them in improvised combinations. For example, you could use a Shunt (homing missile) to slow down an opponent who's far ahead, batter him with a volley of bolts as you catch up then wreck him with a Barge (shockwave attack) as you overtake. The really smart thing about the power-ups, though, is how some of them can be used to counter others. For example, a Barge can be used to deflect a Shunt, or a



mine to block it. Conversely, a Shunt can be used to clear a mine out of the way, as can another mine if you fire it forwards.

So yes, thanks to the power-ups, there's a real sense of calculated attack and defence throughout each race, which is enhanced further by excellent track design. Each course has its own distinct feel, not just aesthetically, but also in terms of the playing style best suited to it. For example, wide tracks with long straights and sweeping bends are more about getting the right power-ups and using them effectively, whereas the tighter tracks are more about driving skill and choice of route. There are no random pick-ups either, every power-up has been selected and positioned where it is for a reason and you'll often find yourself quickly having to weigh up priorities. What matters more? Keeping a fast racing line, getting *that* particular power-up, using the power-up you've got, or avoiding the power-up the driver behind you has?

Sometimes you'll try to tick all the boxes with one deft manoeuvre and fail on every count, but that makes it more satisfying when you nail it and leave the pack choking on your dust.

Another reason you might prefer *Blur* to *Split/Second* is that it's a fuller, more complete package. Where *Split/Second's* tracks, carved as they are from one big environment overlap a bit too much, *Blur's* are numerous and genuinely varied, plus there are

There's a real sense of calculated attack and defence throughout each race

lots of different cars, events, mods and other features to unlock so there's a large range of different race experiences on offer.

Blur's final trump card is its handling. As you'll know if you've ever played *Project Gotham Racing* on the Xbox, Bizarre Creations is probably the best studio there is when it comes to getting the handling right in an arcade racer, and *Blur* handles much like *PGR*, if a little more arcadey. The genius of it is that the cars behave pretty realistically, with the only major concession to fantasy being that you can drive very aggressively without losing control like you would if you pushed too hard in a sim, or in a real car. Basically, it's just right for a pure, intuitive racing experience. Thing is, though, *Blur* isn't a pure racing experience, it's got combat in it, too, and we did feel that the handling might still be a bit too realistic for its own good. It just doesn't feel natural slowing down well in advance of a corner in a game that's so fantastical. In itself, *Blur's* handling is excellent – much better than *Split/Second's* – but we're not entirely sure it suits.



Some of these screens were captured using the in-game Photo mode.





Every race has a Fan Run, where you can negotiate a course of these arches in return for a bonus Light.

EVENT HORIZON

For when it gets a bit too racey...

NOT EVERY EVENT in *Blur* is a race, there are two other types, Destruction and Checkpoint, too.

In Destruction the aim is to score points by shooting cars using Bolt power-ups. Tougher cars will take more shots to destroy and will leave more dangerous hazards in their wake when destroyed.

It's a simple idea, but one that's rather a lot of fun.

Checkpoint events are time trials where you have to pass through a set number of gates before the timer drops to 00:00. Passing checkpoints adds time, as does collecting Stopwatches. There are also plenty of Nitros to help your cause.



Damage effects all look like different kinds of neon light. Some look like fire, but aren't actually supposed to be fire.

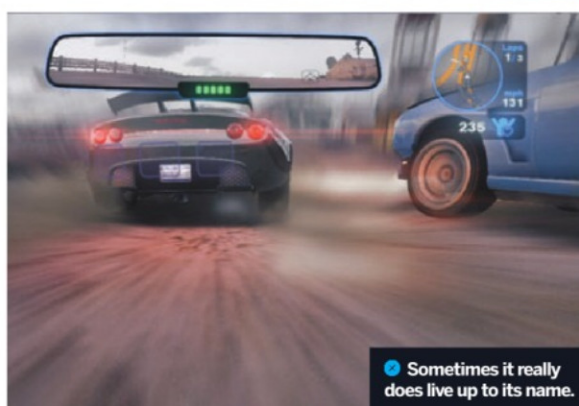
And this slightly too sensible handling is a large part of *Blur*'s biggest shortcoming – it's not that exciting. There are thrills to be had, but the adrenaline factor isn't really squeezed to the max in the way it should be; the way it is in *Split/Second*. There are also issues with the single-player campaign. It's fundamentally well structured but poorly balanced in terms of its difficulty, which ramps up steeply about halfway through and never really feels consistent. These are only minor flaws, though, in what is otherwise a superb take on the combat racing genre, if not quite the best one to be released in the second half of May 2010.

Gavin Mackenzie

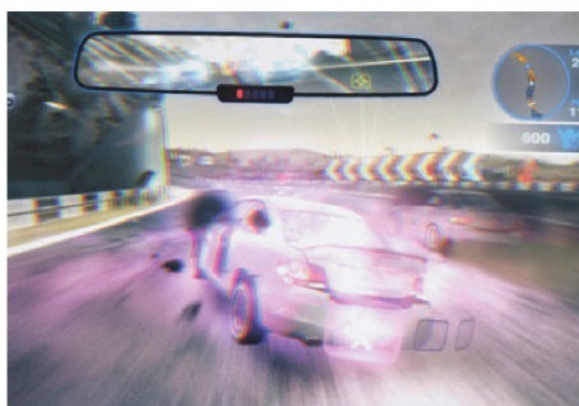
VERDICT

A unique arcade racer with surprising depth and well-balanced action gameplay. But we were still left with the sense that no matter how well it was executed, the 'Mario Kart with real cars' idea was always going to have inherent flaws.

86%



Sometimes it really does live up to its name.

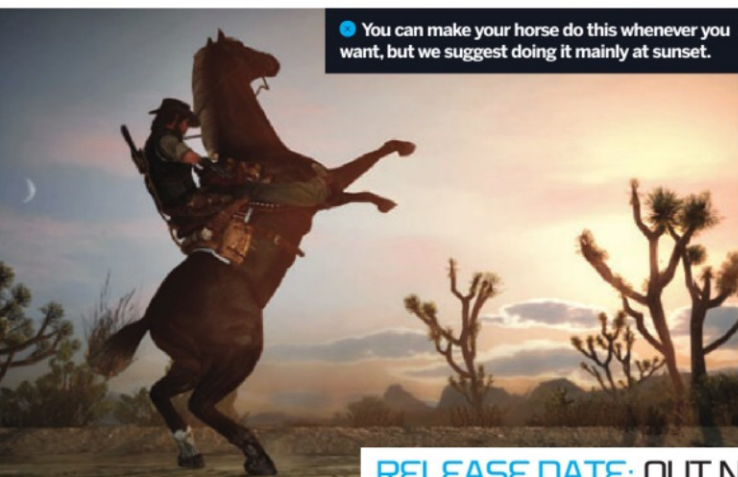


The Shock weapon keeps the pack together without being unreasonably harsh on the leading driver.



Cars can get flipped and rolled, but they almost always land facing the right way so as to keep the racing fluid.





You can make your horse do this whenever you want, but we suggest doing it mainly at sunset.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



DETAILS

Publisher
Rockstar Games
Developer
Rockstar San Diego
Price
£49.99
Players
1-16
Genre
Sandbox
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
18
Website
www.rockstargames.com/reddeadredemption

Red Dead Redemption

A sandbox with a lot of sand in it

Last month **Play** posed the question: is *Red Dead Redemption* just *Grand Theft Auto* with horses? And we came back with the answer: a bit. That's not a wrong answer but, with many hours roaming its prairies (and deserts and plains and swamps and forests and mountains and towns) now behind us, we realise that this question deserves a fuller answer than that. *Red Dead Redemption's* relationship to *Grand Theft Auto* is more than just an incidental detail, y'see.

There are key differences between the two, certainly. *Red Dead's* location and time period have a lot of impact on the overall experience, as does the fact that you do not necessarily play as a professional criminal. But there's still no mistaking the very *GTA* – very *GTA IV*, in fact – formula *Red Dead Redemption* sticks to so closely that it's almost as if it's following a yellow line to a yellow X that it absolutely must

reach if it's to progress any further. More about those lines and Xs later.

It's a great formula, no doubt about that, but it sometimes feels like a restrictive one. *Red Dead* wants to be its own game, and we want that, too, but for all the Stetsons, dusters and cacti, it still feels very much like a *GTA* game. And a lesser one than *GTA IV* at that.

It starts off promisingly enough – more than enough really. The look, sound and feel of the game are all absolutely bang-on. Rockstar really knows how to set a scene and give a game world a strong sense of place. Despite being sparsely populated, *Red Dead Redemption's* world does have a bustle and life to it, which quickly draws you in and eases you into the role of John Marston, a (sort of) former outlaw. You'll recognise how it's being done, as it uses many of the same techniques as *GTA*, but you won't feel like you're in Liberty City during a Wild West theme day. It feels very authentic. Perhaps not quite like the Wild West as it really was, but certainly a lot like the Wild West as we know it from Western movies that, to someone who never saw it first-hand, seem very authentic.

Your first few hours will be spent doing things that are distinctly Western in flavour as well – rounding up cattle, breaking in wild horses, patrolling a ranch, defending livestock from predatory critters – it's enough to make you want to start chewing t'baccy and eating jerky, if you don't already. You might also end up performing a task completely on the spot as part of one of the interactive random events that happen now and again. These are essentially mini-missions, which activate automatically here and there. You can ignore them completely, which will lead to 'failure' but

no penalty, or drop whatever else you happen to be doing and try to help out for a bit of cash, Fame and/or Honor. You might prevent a robbery or unlawful execution, or you might find yourself on the receiving end of a bandit's trick when that poor, defenceless woman you went to help turned out to be working for a gang. These random events don't just make you feel that the world is alive with activity, they make you feel part of it, which is a big plus. Unfortunately, they start to repeat far too much after the first few hours, and you'll eventually get a little tired of hearing the same old fevered pleas from passers-by.

We were looking forward to seeing how *Red Dead's* various features and ideas would be developed as the game progressed but,

It's enough to make you want to start chewing t'baccy and eating jerky, if you don't already

unfortunately, most of them weren't. Instead the *GTA IV* formula started creeping in and we found ourselves doing a lot of 'cut-scene, uneventful journey, cut-scene, shoot-out, cut-scene, chase, cut-scene' kind of missions, which involved a lot of following prescribed lines to prescribed Xs without many choices of our own to be made. Don't get us wrong, the shoot-outs and chases and even the cut-scenes are generally very well done in their own right, but after a while they start to feel like padding. Every now and again, a fresh idea crops up – like a mine cart ride, or an ambush where you plant dynamite in the road – but these missions always seem to be cut short before they've reached their potential, while the cover-to-cover shoot-outs and A to B rides through pretty but empty scenery seem to go on forever. The story, while certainly well told

PVP - POSSE VS POSSE

Online makes *Red Dead Redemption* a different prospect

As good as the single-player campaign of *Red Dead's*, the multiplayer adds a significant wedge of ice cream on the Rockstar gâteau. It's all very similar to *GTA IV's* online functionality with all the typical competitive and team modes, but where *Red Dead* trumps *GTA* is in Free Roam. It's here that the open world really feels special as 16 players charge around the wilderness causing merry havoc. Taking

on gangs, lawmen or just the local wildlife are all fine distractions and hopefully the community can come up with a few of its own. The weapon balancing, structure and development of *Red Dead's* multiplayer are all clear signs that Rockstar is beginning to get to grips with the online space better than ever and that bodes very well for the future. It's thanks to this that *RDR* stands among the higher echelons of PS3 greats.



Or you could try



Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood Issue 181
Packs in the Wild West staples as thoroughly as *Red Dead*, but doesn't have quite the same levels of style or consistency. 85%



by videogame standards, seems to take an age to progress from one plot development to another, too, with most of the characters you meet serving more as inhibitors than enablers. It frustrates Marston and it might well start to frustrate you, too.

But still, it might drag its heels a bit too much and fail to deliver on some of the promises it seems to be making early on, but *Red Dead Redemption* still succeeds in being the most rich, detailed, authentic and best Wild West game ever made. And it's still different enough to *GTA IV* for it to be worth having the both of them.

Gavin Mackenzie

VERDICT

Relocates the familiar *GTA* formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result. But there's also no ignoring that Rockstar has perhaps stayed a little too deep within the confines of its own comfort zone here.

92%



In this series



Red Dead Revolver Issue 117

A very different kind of game from *Red Dead Redemption*, *Revolver* was more of a classic arcade-style third-person shooter, with no *GTA*-esque open world. 80%

Yakuza 4 makes frequent references to previous games in the series.



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW (JAPAN)



DETAILS

Publisher

Sega

Developer

In-house

Price

7,420 Yen (About £50)

Players

1

Genre

RPG/Action-

adventure

Supports

1080p, 1080i, 720p,

PlayStation Network

DualShock 3

Age Rating

Cero D (Age 12 and

up)

Website

www.ryu-ga-gotoku.com/four/index.html

Yakuza 4: Successor To The Legend

Jumping a pit full of yakuza sharks

Yakuza 4 is a game that aspires to take players to a world filled with just enough slight exaggerations to seem cool, but not so many that it becomes absurd. Just before we started this review, we were reminded of that distinction.

We were in Tokyo, not 100 yards from Kabukicho – the red-light district that inspired *Yakuza 4*'s setting, Kamurocho – when we found ourselves very nearly drawn into a real-life fight with the kind of yakuza punks that serve as cannon fodder for your fist in the game. The punks were harassing and

trying to get money from a nerdy-looking Japanese guy. Being the intrepid 21st Century journalists we are, we stopped and decided to live tweet the incident. Without warning, the leader of the punks grabbed the nerd and threw him into a wall not two feet from where we were standing. Ignoring us, the leader dragged the nerd into a nearby alley. The other punks gave us dismissive looks and stayed out of the alley to chat with some yakuza-wannabes.

Thankfully for the nerd, the police arrived and busted up the assault before he received any grave bodily harm.

Had this incident taken place in *Yakuza 4*, the victim would have been saved not by the police, but by another gangster, who would have proceeded to curb stomp the assaulters as blue flames shot out of his jacket – exaggerated game world versus reality.

Blue flames notwithstanding, it's in the attempt to create an exaggerated world that

Yakuza 4 stumbles. The game tries to strike a balance between being a cool badass and the gritty reality of yakuza life. While it succeeds sometimes, by the halfway point the game loses its way and becomes an absurd exaggeration of yakuza stereotypes.

The first thing that jumps out about *Yakuza 4* is how great it looks compared to its predecessor – at least, during cut-scenes or in still screenshots. Once the game starts

Not understanding the Yakuza 4 story isn't as big a problem as you'd imagine

moving, the illusion falls apart. Many of the animations remain unchanged from the PS2 version of the game, and characters move stiffly and awkwardly during the long text-based cut-scenes.

This stiffness is probably a result of *Yakuza 4*'s short development time. As a consequence, most of the environments that you spend your time playing in during the



Quick-time events can catch you by surprise at the start of a fight.

CHANGIN' IT UP

A look at the characters of Yakuza 4

INSTEAD OF PLAYING the entire game as series protagonist Kazuma Kiryu, *Yakuza 4* puts you in the shoes of three kind-hearted bad guys before you once again take on the role of everyone's favourite Japanese badass.



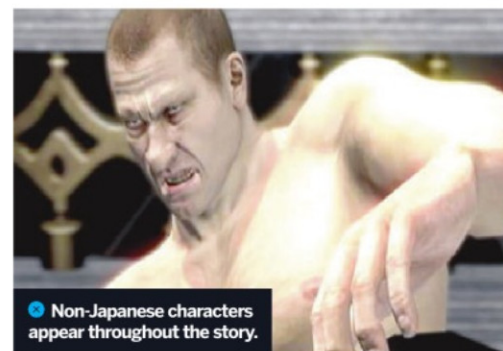
Shun Akiyama: A former member of the Tokyo elite who lost it all, Shun stumbles into some money and rebuilds himself as a kind-hearted money lender with a fast-paced fighting style.



Taiga Saejima: A yakuza who spent years in jail for killing 18 rival gang members, Saejima is a giant of a man who sports the most brutal attacks in the game.



Masoyashi Tanimura: A police detective who earns a bit on the side by shaking down brothel owners. Tanimura needs this cash to support his gambling habit. He's a 'loose cannon' cop.



Non-Japanese characters appear throughout the story.



Yakuza 4: Successor To The Legend



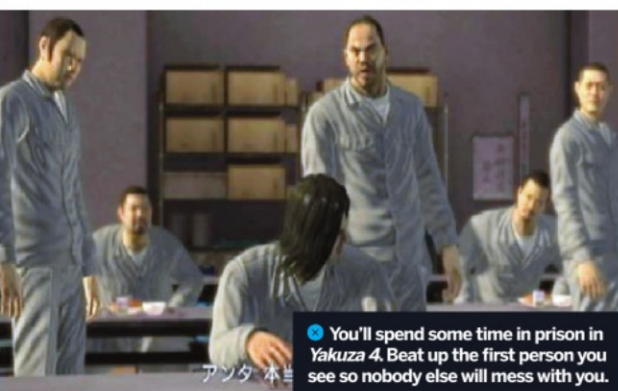
❖ Boring fetch quests, like searching police records, pad out the game's already long gameplay time.



❖ Firearm scenes suggest that few members of the dev team have ever fired a gun, much less know how one works.



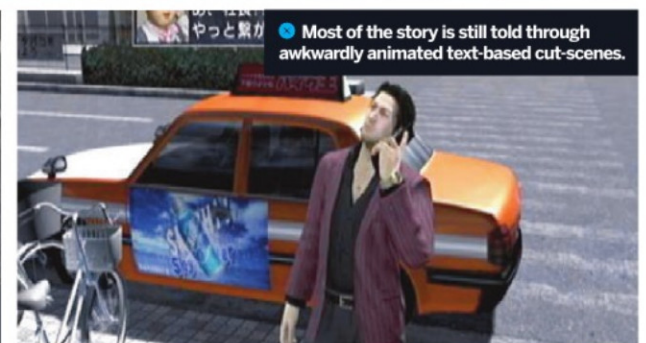
❖ You won't get to play as Kazuma Kiryu until late in the game.



❖ You'll spend some time in prison in Yakuza 4. Beat up the first person you see so nobody else will mess with you.



❖ The random encounter rate has been toned down, allowing for more care-free exploration.



❖ Most of the story is still told through awkwardly animated text-based cut-scenes.

game look like they've come straight from *Yakuza 3*. The Okinawan orphanage and Kamurocho are mostly unchanged.

That's not to say there are no new areas to explore. New rooftop and underground sequences dominate a small part of the game, and a rather large section takes place in a prison. However, all of the new environments are rather bland. Identical sewer tunnels and bare prison walls feel uninspired and look downright ugly compared to the attention to detail and artistry of Kamurocho. In short, the new environments are a little bland and boring, while the material that was taken straight from *Yakuza 3* still impresses.

The combat, too, is mostly unchanged, but as smooth as ever. The addition of three new playable characters (see 'Changin' It Up' boxout) adds a certain amount of variety to combat that started to feel bland by the end of *Yakuza 3*. The protagonist switching also

allowed the developers to increase the rate at which players receive new abilities. Since each character levels up independently of the others, player characters progress fast enough to max out their moves list within the six to ten hours each campaign takes.

With the heavy reuse of assets and the unchanged gameplay, Sega was free to focus on making the story of *Yakuza 4* the main draw of the game. This creates two problems.

This first issue is that if you don't understand Japanese well, you're not getting the story. The language used in *Yakuza 4* is filled with regional dialects of Japanese, a language which varies as much, if not more, from city to city as English in the UK does. Bottom line, unless you've lived in Japan, you're not going to understand much more than the major plot points.

Not understanding the story of *Yakuza 4* isn't as big a problem as you would imagine.

Which brings us to the second problem: *Yakuza 4*'s story is rather absurd. The first half of the game sets up an elaborate series of mysteries and gangland relationships. The second half takes the complicated setup and injects it with enough over-the-top anime-inspired absurdity to make even the most hardened Japanophile roll his eyes.

If you're still aching for more Japanese gangsters after *Yakuza 3* and you don't mind being underwhelmed by the story, *Successor Of The Legend* may be worth a look.

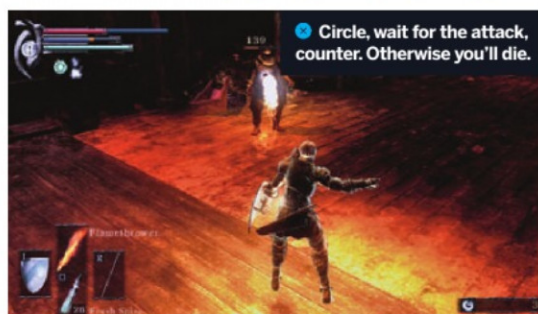
Ryan Winterhalter

VERDICT

The gameplay is similar to *Yakuza 3* but if you still feel like running around Tokyo beating punks up, get your hands on *Yakuza 4*. Just don't expect a stunning story.

75%





RELEASE DATE: 25 JUNE

Demon's Souls

It's arrived late but it's still bloody hard



DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai

Developer
From Software

Price
£49.99

Players
1-4

Genre
Action-RPG

Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1

Age Rating
16

Website
www.namcobandagames.eu/product/playstation-3/demon-s-souls/4376

A few of you may already have been playing this one for a while – *Demon's Souls* was originally released in Japan and Asia back in February 2009 with an English-language version available from the beginning. Or maybe you just waited until last October when it was released in the US. Either way, you may already be well versed in what *Demon's Souls* is. If that's the case, get back to playing it – don't let us hold you up. After all, we know damn well it's one of the most maddeningly addictive games out there and any time spent away from it is time spent wanting to be playing it. Which makes it interesting to see

We know damn well it's one of the most maddeningly addictive games out there

Demon's Souls' eventual European release is coming in the summer, when we're supposed to go outside and *not* play games.

For those who have been living under a hard-game-repelling rock for the last year and a bit, *Demon's Souls* is a difficult

action-RPG (hack, slash, block, magic) of the highest calibre. But that's selling it short by a ridiculous degree, as it's actually one of the best games available on PS3 and exudes a form of difficulty not present in many other titles. You rarely, if ever, feel cheated when you die (which you will do, dozens if not hundreds of times)

and it can always be put down to something you can actually quantify: you didn't raise your shield fast enough; there was a hidden pitfall; that boss is just really stupidly hard. It is frustrating, don't misunderstand these bold claims, it just never feels like the game is going out of its way to find ridiculous ways to rob you of a deserved victory. *Demon's Souls* has solid, very hard mechanics – you have to learn to function within this world or you won't be successful. There is no bending, no changing difficulty levels or reprieves beyond a second

chance as your soul form, but if you learn your way around it you *might* survive.

Demon's Souls also has some wonderful online integration. Other players can leave messages which appear in your game, and (from a certain point) they're free to enter your game – whether to help or hinder is up to them. It's a fantastic system that we are still expecting to see aped everywhere else.

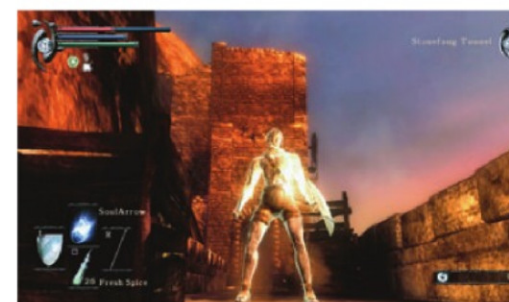
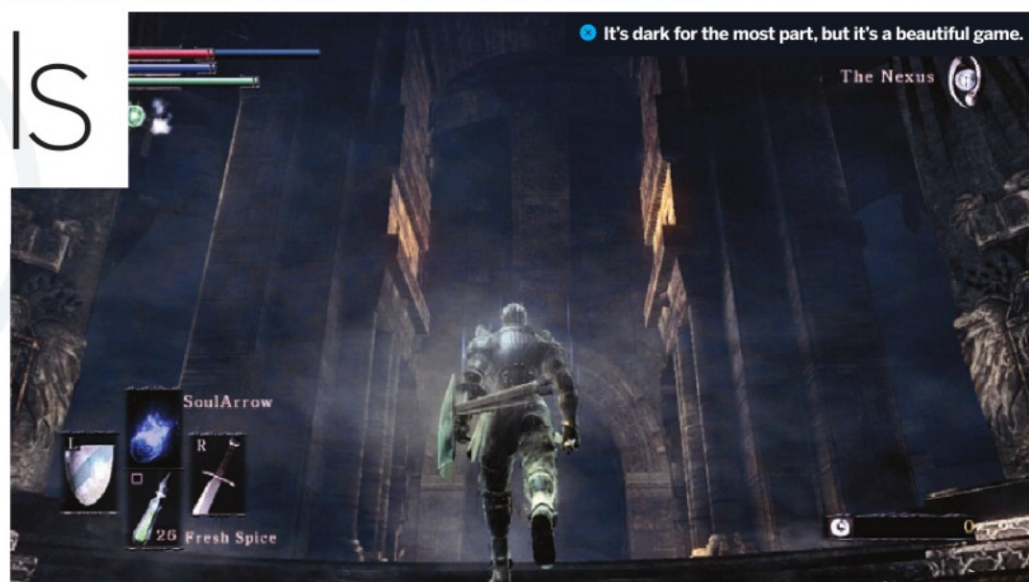
This really is a magnificent package: a great game and tremendous value for money. You will be playing it years down the line.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

We never expected this to come out in Europe, so it's a bonus from start to finish. *Demon's Souls* is also one of the deepest and most atmospheric games out there. Highly recommended to anyone and everyone.

92%



Previously...
in Play



REVIEWED Issue 182
"The same game, just without the words translated – hence, not as good as the English release." 91%



DETAILS

Publisher
Sega
Developer
Sega Studios San Francisco
Price
£39.99
Players
1
Genre
Action adventure
Supports
720p, DualShock 3
Age Rating
16
Website
www.sega.co.uk/
ironman2

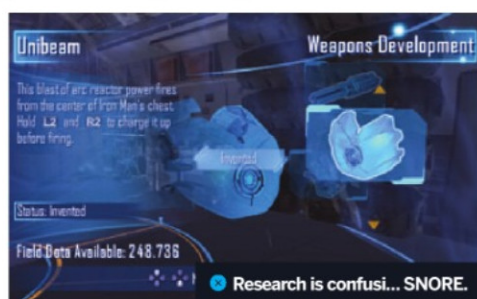


RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Iron Man 2

Uninspired tosh released to tie-in with a film SHOCKER

You hit a point, while playing *Iron Man 2*, that your wrist and hand begin to hurt. This is due to a build-up of lactic acid in and around the wrist, forearm and hand. Said build-up occurs because *you have been pressing R2 for the last 20*



minutes. That's probably the most interesting thing to come out of *Iron Man 2*: the fact that you might learn something about biology.

Third-person action game – snooze – set after the film – yawn – basic, semi-broken, pointless and oft-infuriating combat – snore. Honestly, why even bother? It's eight levels long, takes very little time to finish and has clearly been rushed to get it out at the same time as the film. It's the kind of movie licence that helps explain exactly why we never look forward to movie licences. It's not bad enough to make your brain want to vacate your body for greener pastures, but it is bad. It is lazy. It is absolutely pointless and absolutely nothing other than a cash-in. We're trying to think of



PS3

one thing it does that actually interested us, but we're drawing exactly what the creatives behind the game drew: a blank. We're not mad, we're just disappointed.

Here's something fun: how about next time they don't bother trying with a movie game, we don't bother reviewing it properly?

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

It looks weird, it plays badly, it's rushed, it's short, the controls are all over the place, it frustrates and annoys – it's not entirely broken, it is entirely pointless.

50%



DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai
Developer
Game Republic
Price
£29.99
Players
1
Genre
Action adventure
Supports
720p, Downloadable content, DualShock 3
Age Rating
16
Website
www.clashofthetitansgame.com

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

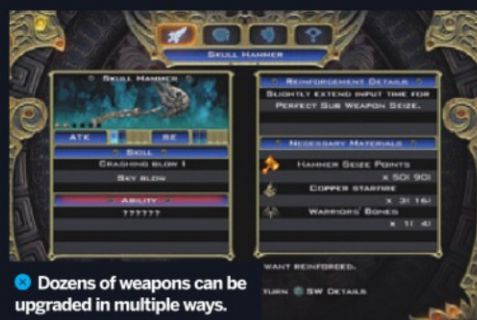
Clash Of The Titans: The Video Game

Titans will clash, in a surprising fashion

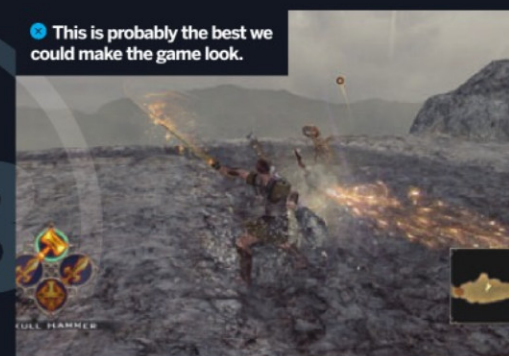
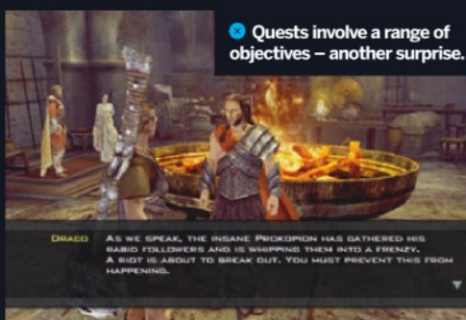
Look at that score down there and tell us you aren't surprised. Go on. If you do, you're a liar. The videogame adaptation of *Clash Of The Titans* isn't a great game in the grand scheme of things, but a combination of solid combat mechanics, surprising depth and a budget price make it one of the better movie-games available.

COTT takes a slightly different route to the blockbuster (rubbish) movie, but still tells the tale of Perseus and his quest to

stop the Kraken from destroying blah de blah. That's what we expected, with the addition of a rushed, hardly fun arcadey brawler game element to the mix. Game Republic obviously wasn't paying attention to this plan, though, instead taking a bit more time on the game. What this leaves us with is a solid fighting engine which is fun to play with, rewards and unlocks that add depth and – get this – make *sense* (eg encounter more shielded enemies, soon



Dozens of weapons can be upgraded in multiple ways.



unlock ability that bypasses shields). A basic RPG-like system of quests, upgrades and challenges mean that – if you enjoy what you play – you can keep on doing so for 15 hours plus.

It can't stand up to much critical scrutiny, though. *COTT* looks bad, the cut-scenes are painful and it offers little that isn't done as well – or better – elsewhere. It's still a surprise package, though.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Take into account the cheap-o price and you have a game that, surprisingly enough, might actually be worth some of your time. It isn't great, but it's quite a fun distraction and far better than most other movie-games. Well done.

65%



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

SBK X: Superbike World Championship

DETAILS

Publisher
Black Bean
Developer
Milestone
Price
£39.99
Players
1-16
Genre
Sports
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
3
Website
www.sbk-x.com

Falling down the field...

There was a time not long ago that this series from Milestone, focusing on the souped-up world of stock motorbike racing, had the playing field essentially to itself. While its rival *MotoGP* licence was being passed around like chicken pox at a child's birthday party, the inexpensive yet reliable *SBK* quietly hoovered up gamers' cash without ever seeking to add fine brush detail on either presentational or logical levels. Like some obscure long-forgotten fable, however, time seems to have caught up with this metaphorical tortoise, its counterpunches outmanoeuvred with ease by young upstart Monumental Games.

Take gameplay modes for example. In answer to Capcom's emphasis on excitement over accuracy, Milestone has divided its title straight down the centre, offering different *DiRT 2*-inspired menus under arcade and

simulation brackets. Rather than having gamers tinker with a spreadsheet of options, they're instead confronted with a standard career when following the racing line, and a rather more vague 'story' when seeking more casual thrills. In truth, neither option offers anything approaching the tactical nuance of its more expensively assembled competitor; story mode in particular simply providing a chance to view embarrassing art assets alongside an equally painful script. That's before we deal with the assumption that casual gamers only want to complete the last few laps of a race, rather than take on a whole challenge only under slightly more forgiving conditions.

Naturally there has been some tinkering on the visual front. Sodden tracks can now undergo evaporation during the course of

a race, while improved motion-blur effects soothe our wizened, overused eyes. None of the above can fully compensate for the truly lifeless environments through which players will speed, however.

There remains, nevertheless, a degree of enjoyment to be wringed from the absorbent leathers of *SBK X*. Its handling model, cold and mathematical notwithstanding, offers

There remains a degree of enjoyment to be wringed from the absorbent leathers of *SBK X*

bike racing's familiar knife-edge skill. There's certainly more to matters than meets the eye, players' minds often half a kilometre further down the track than their physical selves. Ultimately, though, the most compelling reasons to throw your hard-earned cash Milestone's way focuses upon elements at which *MotoGP 09/10* obviously also excels, only with drama of various kinds to spare.

Dave Shaw

VERDICT

Looking increasingly the budget title with each passing year, Milestone's offering is swiftly being eclipsed by its more expensively produced competition. This is unlikely to hold your attention for long.

67%



Or you could try



MotoGP 09/10 Issue 190
Monumental goes all *Blur* on motorcycle racing, offering experience over obsession. 77%

PS3

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Backbreaker

Crash, Bang, Wallop: What A Video(game)



DETAILS

Publisher
505 Games
Developer
NaturalMotion
Price
£49.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Sports
Supports
720p, PSN,
DualShock 3
Age Rating
3
Website
www.backbreaker-
game.com

This is a very difficult game to review for a few reasons. On one hand, it's a potential revolution in sports games. On the other, it's just a budget American football game, made by an English developer, selling at full price. You can probably see why we're torn.

Let's not be down here, though: *Backbreaker* employs the Euphoria engine to wonderful effect. What that means is that the in-game physics are fantastic, re-creating some wonderful lifelike animations and leading to some wince-inducing tackles. It's the kind of tagline you see all over the place, but in *Backbreaker* no two tackles are the same. It helps, in a small way, to keep the experience fresh even once you've become bored of what the rest of the game has to offer, as there will always be a hit that makes you visibly recoil just around the corner. Other than the main draw of *physics!* lies a wealth of customisation options, allowing players to create their team from the ground up. While it's not as robust as we would have hoped when it comes to designing kits, the logo creation is the kind of thing the



● Blitz every time. Never fails.



● The mini-game tackle alley is compulsive 'one more go' gaming.



● The up-close action like this is an interesting idea, it just doesn't work too well.

talented types out there will go to town on. We're rubbish, though, so we couldn't make anything good.

As for the actual game? It's a decent, if basic, game of gridiron. It has issues, though. The camera focuses on one player at a time, and the viewing angle is so narrow it's often difficult to get an idea of what's going on. Changing to other players is always a gamble, as you usually don't know what they're doing. Interceptions are *ridiculously* common. There are just too many issues to gloss over. It isn't helped by the presentation, which is lacking (and repetitive, with the same two songs played at the same two points in games).

Backbreaker ultimately fails to offer anything truly special to sports fans, ending up feeling more like a well-presented, fun-to-play tech demo. It's a wonderful base to build from and it's something we wouldn't be

Backbreaker fails to offer anything truly special to sports fans and feels like a fun-to-play tech demo

surprised to see EA employ in future *Madden* (and other sports) games, but £50 for this alone is a bit too much for us to recommend it. Wait until you can get it cheap and there are hours of fun to be had with mates, but you're likely to be disappointed if you're expecting the Next Big Thing.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

We really wanted to hail *Backbreaker* as a revolution in sports games, but it just isn't good enough. Too many niggles mount up and bring the experience down. All the same, the physics are incredible and it plays a decent game.

70%



● Moments like this often raise a chuckle or three.



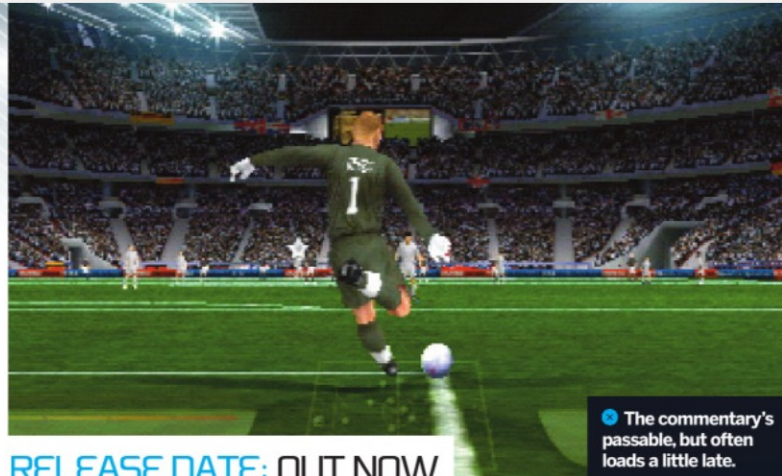
● Bournemouth Beans' players are known to showboat prematurely.





DETAILS

Publisher
EA Sports
Developer
EA Canada
Price
£24.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Sports
Supports
Ad-hoc Wi-Fi
Multiplayer,
Infrastructure Wi-Fi
Multiplayer
Age Rating
3
Website
<http://fifa-world-cup.easports.com/home.action>



• The commentary's passable, but often loads a little late.



• Captain Your Country mode is as engaging as ever.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa

The mildly attractive game

While *FIFA*'s console versions have consistently improved, the PSP spin-off of the series has barely changed since its inception five years ago. It's a problem that remains in this latest entry.

This isn't to say that there isn't a good deal of content. Just about every mode from the console version makes the transfer apart from *Battle Of Nations*.

Other new additions include the ability to use the analogue nub to place spin on the ball when taking free kicks, which opens up some interesting goal-scoring opportunities; and the Golden Moments ability which is

activated by successfully stringing together passes, shots and general good football in order to activate temporary buffs.

The overall experience is acceptable, but the disappointments are familiar. *FIFA* on PSP still struggles to make individual players feel like their real-life counterparts, while the interplay of full teams fails to emulate their real-world characteristics. Furthermore, the gap in class is nowhere near as noticeable as it should be, and the game lacks the blistering pace and speedy strategy of its console brethren as a result.

Still, some of the unpredictability and competition remains, and it will still have



• Things have come a long way since Subbuteo.

you shouting in frustration or leaping from your seat after a screamer. Surely there's no better measure of success than that?

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

There's plenty of content, but the new additions aren't substantial enough to make this a must-buy. As it stands *FIFA World Cup* on PSP is a decent effort, but once again it is belittled by the shadow of its console counterpart.

65%



DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
SCE San Diego
Price
£24.99
Players
1-6
Genre
Racing
Supports
Ad-hoc Wi-Fi
Multiplayer,
Infrastructure Wi-Fi
Multiplayer, Game
Share
Age Rating
7
Website
www.modnation.com

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

ModNation Racers

DIY racing in the palms of your hands

We remember when Sony was all about *The Third Place* and *This Is Living*, now it's opted for the mantra of Play, Create, Share.

LBP spearheaded the charge; *ModNation Racers* is following up in close second place.

Yet while *LBP* shifted onto PSP without sacrificing any of its charm, *ModNation* hasn't made the transition quite so gracefully.

Racing doesn't feel very fluid, with drifting being a little too stiff and unyielding when compared to the elastic energy of cornering on PS3. It's a pity the power-ups don't stack, too – an unfortunate choice that eradicates the risk-reward aspect of play.

What does work, however, is the track-creation mode. Sony San Diego has produced a technically accomplished and intuitive

• Races are virtually lag free in six-player infrastructure mode.



• The PSP's memory handles track creation commendably.

track-creation system. It's silky smooth and you can create a raceable track in minutes.

Nevertheless this is a DIY racer that relies on detail – on racing against and enjoying other people's Mods and trackside flourishes. Here the blurry blocks lack personality. It's a problem that can be applied to the game on a broader scale – *ModNation* is technically proficient, but lacks the detail and polish of an experience better enjoyed on PS3.

Chris McMahon

VERDICT

It's incredibly impressive to see the creation side of the game running so smoothly on PSP, but without exciting and fluid racing the overall experience is something of a letdown. We'll stick with the PS3 version for the time being.

70%

The magazine that feeds your mind...

Explaining everything you ever wanted to know about the world we live in, covering:



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SPACE

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The past explained



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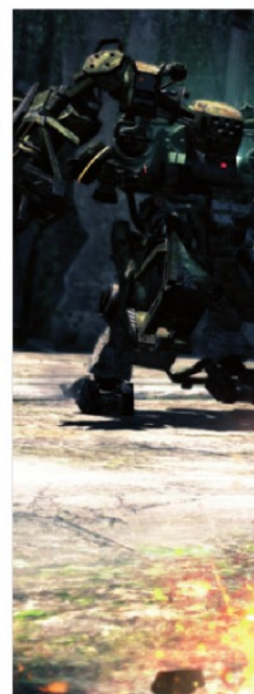
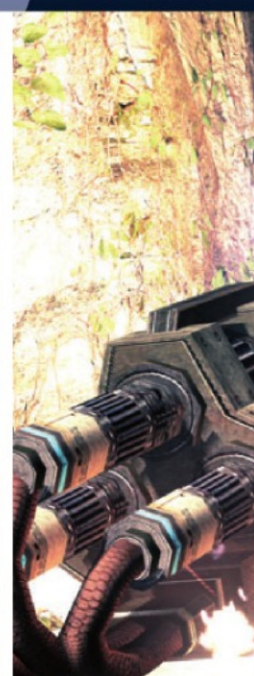


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"Lost Planet 2 is suitably epic and well made" 75%

Even at its most dull, *Lost Planet 2* is nothing short of epic.



DETAILS

Publisher
Capcom
Developer
In-house
Release Date
Out Now
Price
£39.99
Players
1-16
Genre
Third-person shooter
Supports
1080p, Sixaxis, DualShock 3, PSN, Dolby Digital 5.1

Lost Planet 2

The bigger they are, the more fun you'll have with your friends

As has been documented numerous times throughout *Lost Planet 2*'s build-up and release, Capcom's sequel is as far removed as you could imagine from its elder brother. Throwing away its template in favour of one that was more multiplayer focused, it should come as little surprise to find out that when played in this manner it is really rather good.

Structured like a high-definition version of another of the Japanese giant's franchises, *Monster Hunter*, *Lost Planet 2* is designed for you and three friends to team up before attempting to take down some of the biggest bosses in gaming history. Given that it's been Capcom's main concern all along, approaching it in this way is up there with one of the finest experiences you can have on the PlayStation Network. Nearly every level, scenario and boss in *Lost Planet 2* has been sculpted so that a squad has to work together to overcome it, opening up an incredibly rewarding and satisfying mechanic. Of particular note is a

set of circumstances that occurs relatively early on in the game. Asking that you and your team activate and then guard a number of pumps, the teamwork and tactics needed is phenomenally entertaining. Your brethren may start to bicker due to the harsh increase in adrenaline, but successfully overcoming it carries with it a tremendous sense of contentment. It's this idea of tension Capcom continues to play with, especially when it comes to the mentioned gargantuan encounters. Rather than merely ask you to blast away needlessly until the mighty fall, there's a strategy behind each foe. You may have to split off into pairs, two of you concentrating on the beast while the rest manipulate the environment, or spread out to confuse the hulking mammoth that dominates your screen. Regardless what's required, *Lost Planet 2* is extremely adept at keeping you on your toes and keeping you guessing.

Of course, for many the idea of co-operative play is not an aspect of their gaming life they want to indulge in and this group will also find themselves catered for. Dishing out the usual selection of modes (Deathmatch, Conquest et al although under different names) it's Fugitive where the second *Lost Planet* shows its ingenuity. Setting up two

Lost Planet 2 is extremely adept at keeping you on your toes and keeping you guessing

teams, one of which is far bigger than the other, the larger group is sent to try to eliminate the smaller cluster. It may not be too far removed from what many competitors are doing but it works here thanks to, once again, ensuring the intensity remains high. Admittedly it's far more fiddly and frustrating than sticking to co-op, mainly because many of the first's problems

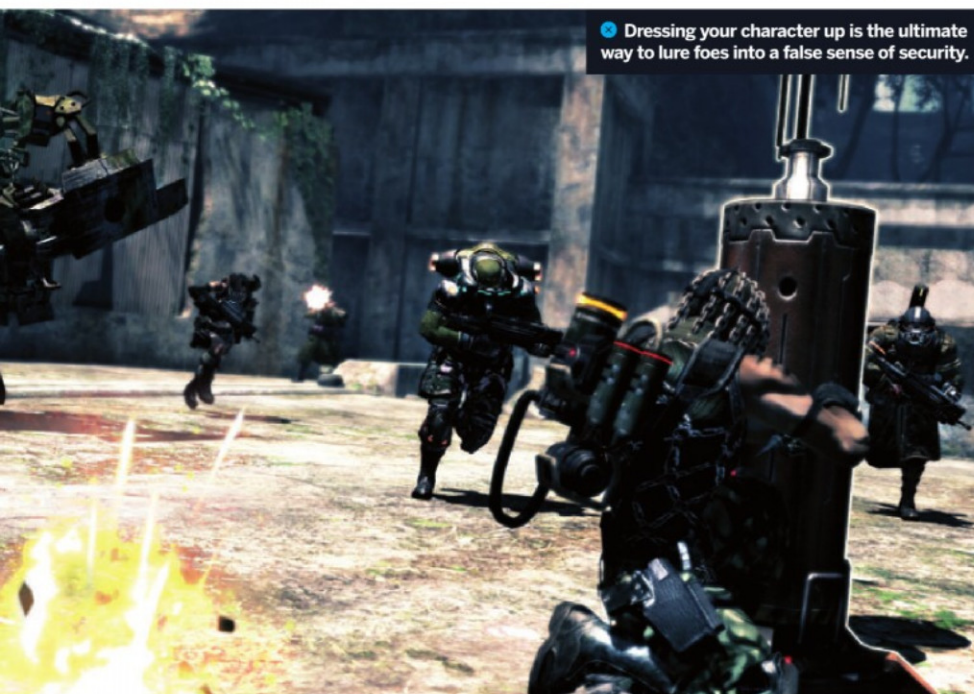
online reviews

ミナル

それはどのようによかったか。



There's plenty of weapons to be used to balance out taking on a mech. It always makes sense to attack such fiends with a friend, though.



Dressing your character up is the ultimate way to lure foes into a false sense of security.

return with a vengeance. All too often it can feel like organisation is thrown out the window for all-out mashing.

Such foibles are minor quibbles, though, and the sheer depth playing through the narrative with friends justifies *Lost Planet 2*'s decision to skew its product in such a fashion. For anyone who has been dreaming of a game that puts the spotlight on teaming up and then kicking ass, this has you covered and then some.

Simon Miller

VERDICT

An excellent co-op game that truly shines its brightest when played with friends over the PlayStation Network. Competitively it doesn't reach such heights but considering this area is still of high quality, *Lost Planet* is downright fantastic.

★★★★★

DRESS TO IMPRESS

You've got to look your best

CAPCOM REALISES THAT with such an emphasis on individuals teaming up people are going to want to look unique. To this end, every chapter you play through houses countless pick-ups that are deliberately in existence to doll up your avatar. From clothes to new guns, anyone who decides to seriously invest some time in *Lost Planet 2* will find they can create quite the protagonist, a fine way for the world of PSN to know just who is about to bring the pain. To achieve such greatness, though, you have to earn points, gained not only by playing well but by doing extra missions found in the Good Job system. Go out of your way to accomplish and the game rewards you, meaning there's always a reason to go above and beyond.

PSN Roundup

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

Genuinely the best around

Publisher Capcom Developer In-house Price £29.99 Players 1-8 Genre Beat-'em-up

Aside from being the best beat-'em-up on the PlayStation 3, *Super Street Fighter IV* is setting an example for every single fighting genre in the business. Not content with simply being a beast offline, Capcom's dedication to improving its online game is particularly worthy of note. As well as making every match exceptionally tight, getting the experience to feel as smooth as possible, the amount of different game modes available to you is a country mile away from the usual 'just fight some other guy' mind-set. Including Team Battle, the Replay Channel and Endless Battle, where you and up to seven of your friends can duke it out in a winner-stays-on format, *Super Street Fighter IV* is insanely addictive and manages to make you stay for just one more round time and time again. With all of the



additional tweaks and updates making their way onto the PlayStation Network as well, it will take something truly special to knock *SSFIV* off of its perch. SM

★★★★★

2010 FIFA WORLD CUP SOUTH AFRICA

The online mode you've always wanted

Publisher EA Sports Developer EA Canada Price £49.99 Players 1-8 Genre Sports

EA is no slouch when it comes to offering online modes in its premier sports franchises. Of course, when it comes to the footballing side, the European and world iterations sometimes don't get the same treatment. So, although on most levels *World Cup* is essentially a watered-down version of *FIFA 10*'s stellar structure, it's the addition of an online tournament that should get fans salivating. Giving you the chance to play through the entire contest, it's a joy to take part in. If that doesn't excite, your online rank is now seen as a club in its own right: winning and losing will see you promoted and relegated from different leagues. Throw in the meta-game that watches where players are located and then uses their performances to build a geographical table and *FIFA World Cup* does have a fair share



of modes. Unfortunately, it's still not the same as the annual iteration and given the price, that's a bit upsetting. Still, this does far more than anyone would've expected. SM

★★★★★

GTA: EPISODES FROM LIBERTY CITY

Rockstar adds elements to its ambitious online world

Publisher Rockstar Developer Rockstar North Price £49.99 Players 1-12 Genre Sandbox

Rockstar is smart. Never one to stop evolving, it wasn't enough for the master of open-world videogames just to create two brand-new stories for its critically acclaimed *Grand Theft Auto IV*. As well as Johnny Klebitz's and Luis Fernando Lopez's exploits, *Episodes From Liberty City* tinkers with the online mode. Along with deathmatch, team deathmatch and free mode from *GTA IV* you can partake in Chopper vs Chopper, BASE Jumping and Witness Protection, the first of which is the real highlight. With one player on a motorbike and the other in a helicopter, it's a frantic race as the individual in the air tries to blow the crap out of those below. With a similar chase mechanic in Witness Protection, the level of adrenaline here is always high. Remember that *The Ballad Of Gay Tony* also keeps



parachutes in the mix and for our money, at least, *Episodes From Liberty City* boasts a much more impressive multiplayer than the fourth iteration of the franchise itself. SM

★★★★★

DETAILS

Publisher
Sega
Developer
In-house
Release Date
Out now
Price
£7.99
Players
1
Genre
Arcade

After Burner Climax GAME Blues skies and frantic action... Sega's back!

AFTER WOWING US with its excellent online version of *OutRun*, Sega is back with another winning PSN release. Based on the hit arcade game that was first released in 2006, *After Burner Climax* is one of the most exciting adrenalin rushes around and while it lasts for little more than ten minutes, it's ten of the best gaming minutes you'll ever have.

Taking control of one of three planes, the aim of *Climax* is to simply fly through the enemy-packed skies as quickly as possible and take down opponents. Continually shooting enemies racks up a combo multiplier and it's also possible to activate 'Climax mode' which slows everything down

for four seconds giving you a window of opportunity to further increase that multiplier.

Climax mode is recharged by flying like a maniac on full throttle, but this in turn makes it harder to dodge incoming missiles, so there's

a tiny amount of strategy to consider as you barrel your way through some of the prettiest landscapes we've seen for some time.

Volcanic islands complete with spewing lava, rich verdant fields that sport a rainbow in its Sega blue skies, a frantic battle high above a canopy of clouds; *Climax* is full of stunningly beautiful moments, easily making it one of the best-looking games on Sony's online service. Add in some truly rawking tunes and the ability to listen to the music from the original *After Burner II* and *Climax* becomes an utter delight.

While best suited for short adrenaline bursts, Sega has packed in plenty of decent extras to ensure that there's always a reason to return to those stunning skies. Arcade mode unlocks a variety of extras, such as extra credits, while the Score Attack leaderboards will keep you going for an age. A stunning arcade port that just keeps giving and giving. **Darran Jones**

VERDICT

Ignore the linearity of the level design and embrace the PSN's most adrenaline-fuelled game since *WipeOut HD*. **91%**



One of the prettiest games on the PSN.

Uncharted 2: Siege Expansion DLC

More multiplayer shenanigans from Naughty Dog

UNCHARTED 2 IS THE game that's full of surprises. Once you've finished the stunning single-player adventure, you'll discover a multiplayer mode that's not only brimming with inventive level layouts and game modes, but still retains a healthy number of players.

Naughty Dog's latest expansion continues this fine tradition by delivering two new



DETAILS

Publisher
Capcom
Developer
Proper Games
Release Date
Out now
Price
£7.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Arcade

Final Fight: Double Impact GAME So much fighting, so little time

FINAL FIGHT HAS come under plenty of criticism lately due to its online DRM, making it impossible to play offline. While we can see arguments for both sides, it doesn't detract from the fact that is a stunning effort from Dundee-based Proper Games.

For those who've never played it before, *Final Fight* is a scrolling fighter from 1989 that had you and a friend cleaning up Metro City in search of Jessica, daughter of mayor Mike Haggard and boyfriend of Cody. It's a fast and furious brawler and has many ties with Capcom's *Street Fighter* series.

Proper Games is clearly a big fan of the original as it has created a stunning port that

captures all the excitement of the first game. There's a huge variety of video filters on offer, remixed music courtesy of Simon Viklund and excellent online play allowing you to jump in and out of games whenever you like.



That's not all, though. Proper Games has also given the same treatment to *Magic Sword*, a fantasy scrolling fighter that's also included. It's not quite as good as *Final Fight*, but it still manages to be great fun and easily justifies Capcom's £8 asking price.

The nature of scrolling fighters means that they do get rather boring if you're playing them on your own, but add a friend to the mix and the enjoyment factor changes dramatically. Here's hoping that both Capcom and Proper Games deliver similar double packs in the future. **Darran Jones**

VERDICT

The presentation is faultless, the gameplay is fantastic and you get two great games. What are you waiting for? **90%**



Two top arcade games for only £8? Yes, please.

Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6 GAME

Lots of fun, but only while it lasts

WE'VE NOW DISCOVERED the murderer haunting Little Riddle and while it has taken us many long months, the end result was certainly worth it. Available separately or in a better value triple pack, the final three parts of the *Blue Toad Murder Files* suffer from exactly the same problem that the first three games had – once they're finished there's no real reason to return to them. While you can revisit the available puzzles, every single conclusion is exactly the same, meaning that there's no long-lasting challenge.

This in itself is something of a real shame, because there's plenty to like about Relentless Software's DLC venture. The characters are charming as hell, the script is witty and full of genuine laughs, it's expertly paced and full of wacky English stereotypes, while the clever twists and turns will keep you guessing until the very end.

Store Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

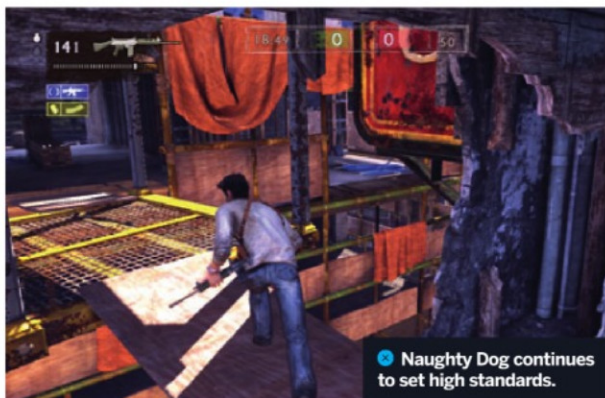
DETAILS

Publisher Sony Europe **Developer** Naughty Dog **Release Date** Out now **Price** £4.99 **Players** 1-3 **Genre** Third-Person Adventure

game maps to experience, 11 new trophies to earn, six new skins and a brand-new multiplayer mode. Not bad for just five pounds.

The new multiplayer mode Siege initially appears to be like any other survival mode. A huge amount of enemies constantly assault you and you have to successfully hold off ten waves to win. You can team up with two friends and then you have to get together to defend relevant zones. Teamwork is essential and with so little cover and so many enemies it becomes a frantic game of cat and mouse. It becomes even more intense if one of your friends gets shot or captured because you'll then have to break into the open or try to down their capture without hitting your mate. Tense, thrilling stuff indeed.

The two new maps are also solid additions to the *Uncharted 2*



experience. High Rise is great for sniping opportunities thanks to its multi-tiered structures and requires you to constantly leap around the huge level, while Museum offers more stealth opportunities, giving you plenty of shadows to hide in. Add in the additional skins and trophies and you have another essential piece of DLC. **DJ**

VERDICT

Naughty Dog is quickly becoming the master of good value DLC and this is no different. An essential download.

★★★★★

DETAILS

Publisher Relentless Software **Developer** In-house **Price** £9.99 **Released** Out now **Players** 1-4 **Genre** Puzzle

● An entertaining adventure but with little replay value.



The puzzles are also of a high quality and seem to be far more challenging than in the first three episodes. There's a great variety of head scratchers on offer and it's all topped off with some charming presentation, gorgeous visuals and expert voice overs.

It's too short-lived, however, and while each episode is entertaining while it lasts, it should take even the densest of gamers to get through each episode in more than an hour. And

with no real longevity that makes the whole venture rather pricey, even for a tenner. We'd certainly like to see further adventures with the Blue Toad Agency, but only if Relentless Software ensures that the next outing offers a little more value for your money. **DJ**

VERDICT

A solid ending to a fun franchise. We're hoping for more from the Blue Toad team.

70%

Store Roundup



AQUA PANIC! GAME

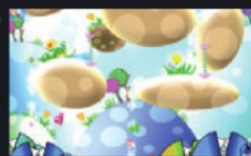
If Lemmings were aquatic

Publisher Eko System **Developer** In-house **Release Date** Out now **Price** £7.99 **Players** 1-2 **Genre** Puzzle

FIRST RELEASED ON Sony's PSP as *Downstream Panic!*, the game's developer Eko System has now started its fiendish puzzler up for the PlayStation 3 generation and given it a new name. Each level of *Aqua Panic!* has you trying to save a specific amount of fish as they cascade down screen in a sheet of water. You're introduced to new objects each level, such as bombs and plants, that make your job a little easier, but ultimately you must rely on your brain and quick reflexes to complete each of the 80 available stages.

Despite being a solid and entertaining puzzle game, *Aqua Panic!* is let down somewhat by fiddly controls and some frustratingly tough levels.

68%



NAMCO MUSEUM ESSENTIALS GAME

Disappointingly dull

Publisher Namco Bandai **Developer** In-house **Release Date** Out Now **Price** £7.99 **Players** 1-2 **Genre** Arcade

THIS NEW DOWNLOAD from Namco Bandai is effectively a mini compilation of five of its most well-known games – *Pac-Man*, *Galaga*, *Dig Dug*, *Dragon Spirit* and *Xevious* – that integrates rather impressively with PlayStation Home. Presentation throughout is absolutely stunning with a whole range of options and extras to discover, while a sixth game, *Xevious Resurrection* is also available and pretty good to boot.

All the fantastic presentation in the world, however, can't hide the fact that most of the games in *Namco Museum Essentials* are pretty dull to play.

60%



SONIC & SEGA ALL-STARS RACING: METAL SONIC & DEATH EGG ZONE DLC

To be this average takes Sumo Digital

Publisher Sega **Developer** Sumo Digital **Release Date** Out now **Price** £4.79 **Players** 2-8 **Genre** Racing

THE FIRST PIECE of DLC for *Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing* doesn't, unfortunately, offer you a great deal for your money.

Metal Sonic is a nice addition to the already impressive roster. Sumo has also included five new music tracks. Ultimately, though, it's the new track Egg Hanger that will garner the most interest and, while it features a couple of Sega cameos, the sheer length and width of the track means it's not quite as impressive as we were hoping for. We still want more, though.

★★★★★



SECTION 8 GAME

Hello? Is there anybody out there?

Publisher TimeGate Studios **Developer** In-House **Release Date** Out Now **Price** £19.99 **Players** 1-32 **Genre** First-Person Shooter

POOR OLD TIMEGATE Studios. It's created a first-person shooter that's packed full

of well-designed maps, but no bugger's playing it. Go online and most of the 32-player matches are made up of bots of dubious AI that are no substitute for proper players. It's a pity that this is happening as even with its £20 price tag *Section 8* offers great value for money thanks to a multitude of game modes and plenty of nice touches like not respawning – you simply choose where you want to start – ensure that *Section 8* feels extremely refreshing compared to most other online shooters on Sony's service.

78%



ZEN PINBALL: EXCALIBUR TABLE DLC

Swords, sorcery and pinballs

Publisher Zen Studios **Developer** In-house **Release Date** Out now **Price** £1.59 **Players** 1-2 **Genre** Pinball

INITIALLY YOU'LL THINK that *Zen Pinball's* latest piece of DLC is a waste of money. The table seems bland and devoid of options, it is a little slower than the others that are available and it takes an age to rack up large scores. After a while, though, you'll discover all of *Excalibur's* little intricacies and while it's not quite as good as the *Street Fighter* and *Ninja Gaiden* tables, it soon proves to have plenty of replay value. It's certainly not the best pinball table in the set, but there's no arguing with the puny price point.

★★★★★



LEAD & GOLD: GANGS OF THE WILD WEST GAME

Hold your horses for Red Dead

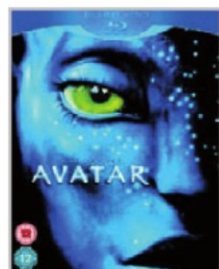
Publisher Paradox Interactive AB **Developer** Fatshark **Release Date** Out now **Price** £11.99 **Players** 1-12 **Genre** Third-person shooter

THOSE WANTING a bit of cowboy action before *Red Dead Redemption* appears may want to steer clear of this effort from Fatshark. While it features plenty of fun multiplayer modes, decent visuals and solid physics, games are constantly let down by intolerable lag that takes much of the fun out of it. This is a shame as the stages are well designed and the four available characters all have their own strengths and weaknesses, but the annoying lag and lack of players means you should think hard before spending your £12.

65%



● If *Avatar*'s script and dialogue matched the stunning action scenes then this could have been the greatest film of all time... Probably.



DETAILS

Price
£29.99
Sound
DTS-HD Master
Audio 5.1
Director
James Cameron
Starring
Sam Worthington,
Zoe Saldana,
Stephen Lang

Avatar

Putting the blue in Blu-ray

Avatar was a global success, becoming the biggest grossing film of all time. It's hardly unsurprising then to discover that its Blu-ray release is perhaps the most cynical example of the format that we've ever seen. Admittedly Fox has already stated that this was always going to be a film-only experience from the very beginning and that later editions would be released further on in the year, but we're still staggered by the sheer cheekiness of what's on offer here.

There are no extras, not even a single trailer, and no 3D version of the movie, perhaps the biggest surprise as that was the huge selling point of *Avatar* in the first place. No, what you have here is a barebones disc (with a DVD thrown in for good measure) and nothing else. It smacks of corporate greed and we'd advise you all to vote with your wallets and wait for the release that's due at the end of the year.

If UK owners are the same as their US cousins, then this advice is most likely to be ignored as the Blu-ray broke all sales records in America after being on sale for just four days; an admittedly impressive achievement.

Of course, all the above would be fine if this was world-class cinema, but it isn't.

Avatar is all style and no substance. Big, bold, brash and most of all stupid, it's an uneven fusion of fantastic set pieces and atrocious dialogue. All married to a ridiculous plot that's constantly played around with just so Cameron can ensure that all the boxes he created in *Titanic* – star-crossed lovers, dramatic ending, stunning set pieces – are ticked. You can almost hear him rubbing his hands with glee over the excellent audio.

And that's what really grates us about *Avatar*. For all its inane dialogue and dreary plot it's perhaps one of the greatest-looking and sounding Blu-rays that you're ever likely to see. While it can't hope to recapture the magic that its 3D bigger brother created, it's nevertheless absolutely stunning to look at, with bright primary colours that literally pop off the screen. Detail is also staggeringly good, allowing you to appreciate just how good the CGI actually is. Admittedly, certain monsters now look a little faker than they did on the silver screen, but there's no denying the stunning quality of *Avatar*'s transfer.



● If a better-looking Blu-ray exists then we've never had the fortune to see it.

Add in a thunderously good soundtrack that's full of action whether you're viewing the tranquil jungles of Pandora, or thrust into its huge battles and from a technical viewpoint it's one of the finest examples of the format you can buy. What a pity then that the awful story and money men had to get in the way.

Darran Jones

VERDICT

It looks and sounds absolutely glorious, but do you really want to pay £30 for such a barebones disc? If you need an *Avatar* fix then rent this and wait for the special edition.

RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Plus all
the latest
hardware
reviews

Blu-ray Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

Competition

Saving Private Ryan

PRICE: £24.99

SOUND: Dolby TrueHD 5.1

DIRECTOR: Steven Spielberg

STARRING: Tom Hanks, Matt Damon, Tom Sizemore



AFTER NEARLY A two-year wait Steven Spielberg has finally started to release more of his films on Blu-ray. *Saving Private Ryan*, besides being a fantastic film, offers an excellent transfer that really brings home the grittiness of the tense on-screen battles. It also features an incredible audio track that will have you hiding behind your sofa. **DJ RATING: ★★★★★**

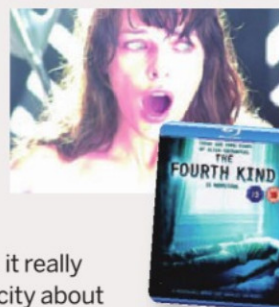
The Fourth Kind

PRICE: £24.99

SOUND: DTS-HD MA 5.1

DIRECTOR: Olatunde Osunsanmi

STARRING: Milla Jovovich, Will Patton



THE FOURTH KIND tries hard, it really does. It tries to create authenticity about the subject of alien abduction by interjecting clips from supposedly 'real' footage with the on-screen action, but it just fails miserably. Aside from a manic turn from Jovovich, this is pretty awful stuff. **DJ RATING: ★★★★★**

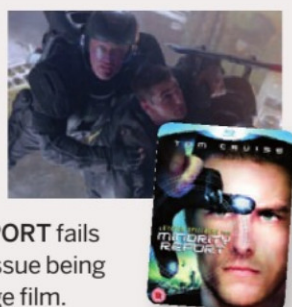
Minority Report

PRICE: £17.99

SOUND: DTS-HD MA 5.1

DIRECTOR: Steven Spielberg

STARRING: Tom Cruise, Colin Farrell, Max von Sydow



SPIELBERG'S MINORITY REPORT fails on several levels. The biggest issue being the fact that it's a pretty average film. The transfer is also rather underwhelming, lacking the detail of other futuristic epics like *I, Robot*. It's got some decent extras and a solid soundtrack but it's no *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*. **DJ RATING: ★★★★★**

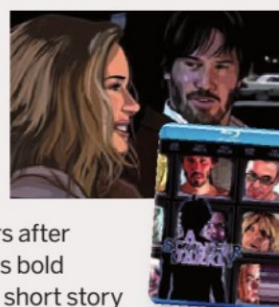
A Scanner Darkly

PRICE: £17.99

SOUND: Dolby Digital 5.1

DIRECTOR: Richard Linklater

STARRING: Keanu Reeves, Robert Downey Jr



FINALLY ARRIVING TWO years after its US debut, Richard Linklater's bold interpretation of Philip K Dick's short story finally hits the UK. While it's an absolutely stunning transfer, it remains a confusing mess of a film that's only saved by some solid performances from its stars and Linklater's assured directorial flourishes. **DJ RATING: ★★★★★**

Daybreakers

PRICE: £24.99

SOUND: DTS-HD MA 7.1

DIRECTORS: Peter Spierig, Michael Spierig

STARRING: Ethan Hawke, Willem Dafoe



AS VAMPIRES CONTINUE to reign at the box office, this offering appears in an excellent Blu-ray presentation. With its interesting premise – vampires rule the world but are running out of human food – *Daybreakers* is only let down by the odd cliché. Don't let that put you off, though. **DJ RATING: ★★★★★**

The Men Who Stare At Goats

PRICE: £24.99

SOUND: Dolby Digital TrueHD 5.1

DIRECTOR: Grant Heslov

STARRING: George Clooney, Jeff Bridges



GEORGE CLOONEY IS the best thing about this movie. Occasionally interspersed with moments of genius, *The Men Who Stare At Goats* is surprisingly lacklustre considering the talent involved. The transfer is exceptional and there are some great extras, but you'd be better off with the original novel. **DJ RATING: ★★★★★**



WIN! Bad Boys In Blu

Win an HDTV and a copy of Bad Boys on Blu-ray

THERE ARE CERTAIN movies well worth watching in high definition and blockbuster action movies are at the top of that list – Michael Bay's *Bad Boys* is considered by many to be the action movie so we're pleased to see it earn a release on Blu-ray. So happy in fact that we want to share our delight with you by giving away a copy of the movie and a brand-new HDTV to watch it on so you can enjoy the car chases and explosions time and time again.

To be in with a chance of bringing Smith and Lawrence home simply answer this question:

Bad Boys was directed by Michael Bay but which of these films did he not direct?

- a) Transformers
- b) Armageddon
- c) Star Trek

If you're not one of the lucky winners this time you can still grab yourself a copy of *Bad Boys* on Blu-ray now courtesy of Sony Pictures Home Entertainment.



Terms And Conditions

To submit your answer, simply email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject line 'Bad Boys competition' plus your name and address. The closing date for entries is 7 July 2010. Please be aware that answers must be submitted to the above email address only, and any left through the comments section of our website will be automatically disqualified.

This competition is open to residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Imagine Publishing has the right to substitute the prize for a similar item of equal or higher value. Employees of Imagine Publishing (including freelancers), their relatives, or any agents are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash. Full terms and conditions are available upon request. From time to time, Imagine Publishing or its agents may send you related material or special offers. If you do not want to receive this, please state it clearly on your competition entry.

HD Reviews TVs and media systems that'll make your home entertainment come to life



Sony BDPS370

PRICE: £142.99

SONY CONTINUES TO set the pace in the format it co-created with a brand-new Blu-ray player that features the very latest HD technology. In addition to featuring truly impressive upscaling for your existing DVDs, this is the latest model to feature Sony's excellent BRAVIA Internet Video, allowing you to stream all sorts of music and videos. **★★★★★**



Philips BDP3000

PRICE: £99.99

PHILIPS' BDP3000 IS a little long in the tooth now, but at under £100 this Blu-ray player from the Dutch giant offers excellent value for money. As well as featuring the latest BD-Live profile, the BDP3000 offers solid – if not spectacular – upscaling, 24 frames per second for best movie quality and excellent 7.1 sound. A solid player at a very decent price. **★★★★★**



LG BD370

PRICE: £149.99

WHILE THIS LACKS the video integration of Sony's new player, LG has at least included access to YouTube enabling access to over 2.5 billion videos. In addition to playing the latest Blu-rays and upscaling DVDs it's also possible to view films directly from the included USB ports. Add in solid DivX support and LG's machine becomes an excellent purchase. **★★★★★**

PLAY# Playlist

If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

DNF DID NOT FINISH Resident Evil 1.5

PSone • 1997



FOLLOWING THE RELEASE of *Resident Evil* in 1996, Capcom decided to make a sequel. It would be called *Resident Evil 2* and would be set in Raccoon City. The *Resi 2* you ended up playing wasn't the game originally made. That honour falls to *Resident Evil 1.5*.



THIS VERSION WAS allegedly 75 per cent complete before Capcom canned it, stating it was too similar to the original. Development restarted on a new version of *Resi 2* and the rest is history. The thing is, we'd already seen quite a bit of *Resi 1.5* by this point.



IT FOLLOWED THE adventures of Leon Kennedy and Elza Walker and featured different enemies and weapons – a fair bit of which was released in footage that you can now find online. But the actual, playable game? Dead.



THE RUMOURED EXISTING version of *Resi 1.5* could – and should – be released as a PSN download. Charge us a few quid. Call it a premium demo. Make sure we know it's not a full version. We can't forget the *Resident Evil* that Did Not Finish, so let us have a pop at it.

PS3 LISTING

game	issue	score
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Borderlands	185	80%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Damnation	181	38%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%



Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.



The most over-the-top, inventive, consistently thrilling, overtly sexual, guiltily enjoyable Japanese action game we've played in years.



This FPS-adventure hybrid has been admirably translated to the PS3. The most atmospheric game of our time.

game	issue	score
Demon's Souls	182	91%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Eat Lead	178	38%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
God Of War III	190	88%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%



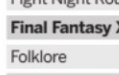
Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.



The best football game made marginally better. The crown held by PES seems like so long ago now.



If you haven't already bought it, then stop reading this box, put your shoes on and go out and get it! The best game ever? Probably.



Two fine expansions bundled together and without the need for GTA IV to play them. What more could you want.

game	issue	score
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
inFamous	180	81%
Iron Man	166	58%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Lair	158	52%
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
LOTR: Conquest	175	52%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
MAG	189	68%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%



World Tour just about manages to trump rival Rock Band with its entertaining music-creation tools, and quality peripherals.



Sony has proven that it has a PlayStation platform capable of supporting a truly world-class FPS. Best graphics ever.



Create, share and play. Sackboy heads up Media Molecule's highly customisable and adorable platformer.



Not the final *Metal Gear Solid* game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.



A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played.

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Lost Planet 2 PS3	75%	3D Dot Game Heroes PS3	87%
Split/Second: Velocity PS3	90%	Patchwork Heroes PSP	85%
ModNation Racers PS3	90%	What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2 PSP	78%
FIFA World Cup 2010 PS3	70%	Dead Or Alive: Paradise PSP	56%
Skate 3 PS3	86%	Mega Man 10 PSN	82%
Dead To Rights: Retribution PS3	68%	Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment PSN	87%
Nier PS3	54%	Wakeboarding HD PSN	65%

game	issue	score
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
 With its balls strapped firmly to the wall, <i>Pacific Rift</i> amplifies the drama of the original to create the PS3's best racing title.		
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
NASCAR 08	157	38%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Pure	171	80%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%
 With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, <i>Resistance 2</i> is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
 With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.		
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%

game	issue	score
Saw	186	52%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
Sega Rally	158	92%
 Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for <i>Colin McRae</i>. Not much in it, really.		
Sega Superstars Tennis	165	68%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
Simpsons Game	160	82%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Soul Calibur IV	169	94%
 Even the gimmicky appearance of Darth Vader can't spoil <i>Soul Calibur IV</i>. Another wonderful addition to the franchise.		
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
 The best beat-'em-up on the PS3, probably the best beat-'em-up ever, and maybe even the best game ever. Our poor little thumbs.		
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
 The fact that you're buying a lot of stuff you've probably bought already is the only drawback to what is the best fighter ever made.		
Tekken 6	184	94%
 There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, <i>nothing</i>, stops <i>Tekken 6</i> from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
 It's a gorgeous game that'll make Beatles fans feel like they're being swaddled in a veil of pure joy. A breathtaking product.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	163	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
 This proves once and for all that Western RPGs are better than Japanese ones! Sort of. Whatever, <i>Oblivion</i> is an awesome game.		
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The Orange Box	161	93%
 Five brilliant games for the price of one, what on Earth could be better than that? Nothing, that's what. <i>Absolutely nothing</i>.		
The Saboteur	187	67%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%

game	issue	score
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X	177	75%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
 <i>Among Thieves</i> has proven itself to be a real work of class. It's one of the best games in recent years.		
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
 Pick-up-and-play gameplay strikes another blow, proving that the PS3 is currently at its best when it keeps it simple.		
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhawk	157	84%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown Vs. Raw 2010	185	77%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
X-Blades	178	54%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza 3	191	80%

PS STORE LISTING



1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%

*denotes import review

GAMES THAT WERE MEANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD



Dropship

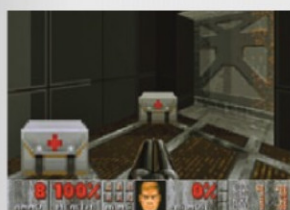
PS2 • 2002

DROPSHIP WAS encompassed by a hype-wave of epic proportions almost ten years ago – a product of the early hype-ripples of the PS2's launch. At the time it did look like something rather special, and as we all know, looks are everything when it comes to the promotional machine. It was good, then, that when the game actually landed in our laps we were impressed, awarding it 90% in **Play 85**. We said it played "like you always wanted a game to play" and were generally impressed with everything it had to offer, adding, "As yet, there aren't any other games... which give the player such a highly textured feeling of being in a science-fiction battle," (we also said we were "aroused" by the sight of "finely crafted" war machines... ahem). In short, we liked it. We were impressed by the presentation, the scale and the production values of *Dropship* and we expected more of this to come along in due course. It didn't.



Even though it was a good game, especially once you got the hang of the control scheme, it's completely dropped off the radar. *Dropship* is a forgotten property, consigned to ignominy for the rest of its ignored existence and reduced to nothing more than a footnote in the PlayStation 2's history. It was meant to create a whole new world of fantastic-looking worlds, unlimited draw distances and generally be everything 'next-gen' that we wanted out of a game in the early-Noughties. Instead we are inundated with first-person shooter titles, licensed properties and football games – futuristic air combat has been relegated to a niche, even though its future looked so bright back in 2002. *Dropship* didn't fail to impress us, but unfortunately it did fail to make a lasting impression on gamers. Let's raise a glass to this glorious, forgotten also-ran.

GAMING CLICHES & VIDEOGAME LOGIC

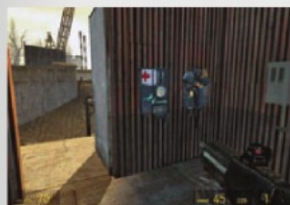


Health packs

THE LOGIC IS... questionable when you put it under a reasonable amount of scrutiny: you have three bullets lodged in your chest, you are struggling to do anything and are – in fact – just about to die. You see a small box on the floor with the international symbol for first aid on it, you walk over it and suddenly you're as healthy as Sportacus on a good day. It soon became cliché and it is definitely a grade-A case of videogame logic in action, but we wouldn't have it any other way. Health packs remind us of *Doom* and *Half-Life*, and as a result they make us happy.

The humble health pack has been reduced to a side attraction in recent years, though. It seems that there is no longer a place for a one-stop fix, healing all broken bones, diseases and symptoms of hayfever at the same time. No, we now live in a world where it is accepted logic that simply hiding behind a corner for a bit is enough to regenerate limbs. Yes, that clearly makes far more sense. While there has been a minor resurgence of the first-aid kit, used in combination with regenerating health, it still doesn't enjoy the prominence it used to.

The simple old health kit mechanism worked as a



wonderful carrot on a stick – yes, it's cliché, but it works. It presses the player on to make progress and to approach a situation aggressively in order to survive. Compare this with *Modern Warfare 2*'s 'hide behind a wall until your boobies are better' system and you can see why we prefer the former. We'd rather be pushed forward into a proactive death than flail, and ultimately fail, on the back foot.

game	issue	score
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Bombberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for <i>Braid</i> . Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	168	70%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer Red Alert 3: Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Driver	171	90%
With the most cinematic car chases ever seen in a game, <i>Driver</i> made a huge impact in 1998. Despite rosey graphics, it's still a playable title.		
Droplitz	184	91%
echochrome	169	85%
Elefunk	170	45%
Everybody's Golf 2	62	83%
Fade To Black	09	44%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
Even after all these years it still holds up. In fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997.		
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
Flock!	179	70%
fiOw	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
G-Police	27	84%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperballoid HD	188	70%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Kula World	172	71%
Lemmings	151	79%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%

game	issue	score
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Probably the best puzzle game on the PSN, which is saying something because there's loads of competition.		
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.		
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Motorhead	173	60%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
So addictive it should come with some sort of government warning. Terrific value for money and a superb little puzzle game.		
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
The second game in the <i>PixelJunk</i> series is great fun and brilliantly addictive. Buy it and play it constantly for hours on end!		
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
Q-Games delivers excellence on the PSN once again with its <i>PixelJunk</i> series, this time in the form of a classic shoot-'em-up.		
Piyotama	162	62%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Gabe Logan's gritty PSone adventure has shadowed all that came after. As always, the original really is best.		
Snakeball	176	92%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Snake meets <i>Pac-Man</i> meets GoogleMaps. <i>The Last Guy</i> is yet another innovative and compelling addition to the PSN's line-up.		

game	issue	score
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Uno	189	85%
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
WipEout	01	89%
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Worms	179	91%
Zuma	182	78%

PSP mini LISTING

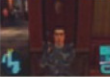
Alien Havoc	186	68%
Bloons	186	65%
Brainpipe	186	70%
BreakQuest	186	45%
Field Runners	186	85%
Fortix	186	57%
Funky Punch	186	49%
Hero of Sparta	186	57%
Kahoots	186	88%
Pinball Fantasies	186	90%
Puzzle Scope	186	75%
Tetris	186	93%
How it is possible to make Tetris feel so fresh and so much fun again we don't know, but it's managed here.		
Vempire	186	67%

PSP LISTING

300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy	134	44%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bombberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Despite being more of a 'best of' than a completely new game, <i>Legends</i> is the best racing game on the PSP.		
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%

game	issue	score
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core – Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
 An absolute must-have for RPG fans, and one of the best titles available on the PSP. A simply brilliant game.		
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
F1 2009	187	66%
F1 Grand Prix	134	81%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	147	81%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld	139	82%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Gripshift	136	81%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
 Bar some combat control issues, GTA: Chinatown Wars has perfectly translated to the PSP. It's a must-have game.		
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
 Improving on its predecessor in every way, the only way Vice City Stories could be topped is if San Andreas comes to the PSP.		
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
 Refined in certain areas and slightly worse in Create mode but still a fantastic addition to PSP's lineup.		

game	issue	score
LocoRoco	143	94%
 We called this the definitive PSP title in our review, and it is a game that no PSP owner should be without.		
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
Medieval Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
 We're not too clued up on retro games, but we do know our Metal Slug and the Anthology proves to be a great compilation.		
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
 More excellent card-based espionage starring everyone's favourite mullet-head, with funky new cel-shaded graphics.		
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	134	57%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends: Akatsuki Rising	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
Need For Speed Most Wanted	136	73%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCroIS	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
 Arguably the best launch game on the PSP, Ridge Racer still stands up as one of the finest racing games for the system.		
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
 Unplugged comes highly recommended. It's superb – there are few better rhythm-action games on the handheld.		
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%

game	issue	score
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
 New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights themselves are as hectic and solid as ever. A portable delight.		
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
 In the absence of a 'real' Metal Gear game, it's left to Gabe Logan to carry the stealthy torch, and he does a fine job of it too.		
Syphon Filter: Logan's Shadow	161	84%
Tales Of Eternia	138	85%
Tales Of The World	158	56%
Taito Legends	145	64%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
 Tekken: Dark Resurrection is instantly playable and provides the PSP's first great brawler.		
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
The Con	153	59%
The Cube	153	64%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
The Godfather Mob Wars	136	66%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
The Sims 2	137	71%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
 Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld WipEout game could be, Pure is an essential PSP purchase.		
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%

*denotes import review

REMAKES WE'D LIKE TO SEE

Destruction Derby 2

PSone • 1997



WE HAVE OUR *FlatOuts*, we now have *Split/Second*. We have PSN games and arcade knockabout nonsense. But we don't have *Destruction Derby 2*. It was once one of the only things we needed to have fun with our PlayStations.



IT'S BEEN DEAD for six years now, but it's not forgotten. With every crash in other games we think back to the pinnacle of the series: *Destruction Derby 2*. It was never the same after that.



WE PREFER THE second game over the first as everything was ramped up. Sometimes literally. You could flip the car, roll and jump about like a maniac. It really was turned up to 11.



THE IMITATORS CAME and went – they've even stayed a while and entertained us. But just as we crave a new *Twisted Metal* game, we yearn for a return to the world of *Destruction Derby 2*.



REFLECTIONS STILL EXIST, though now under Ubisoft. Surely this is a perfect time to remake one of the most-loved stock car games ever? Or at least give us a PSN version.

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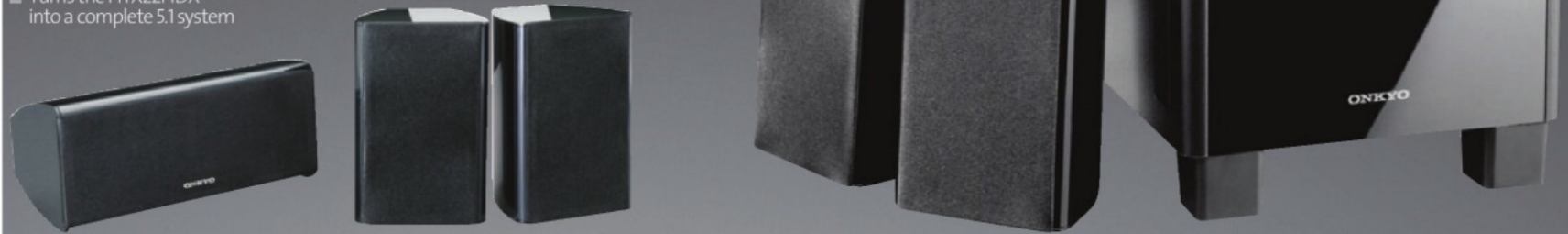
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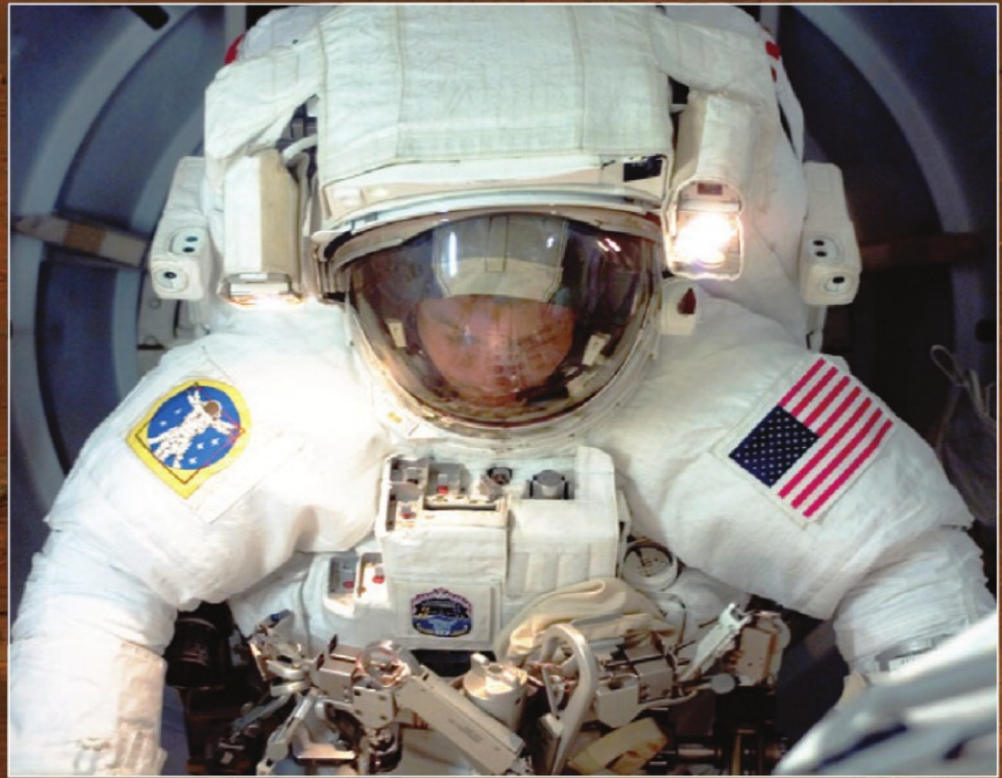
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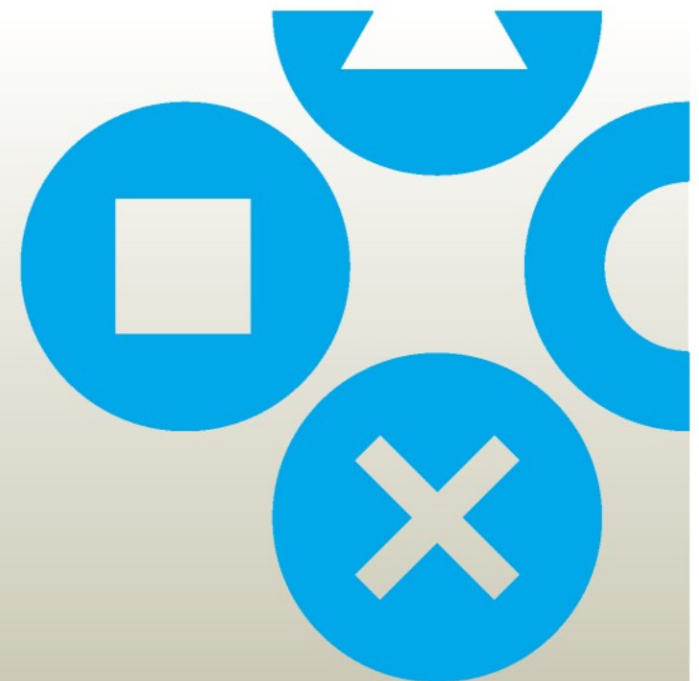
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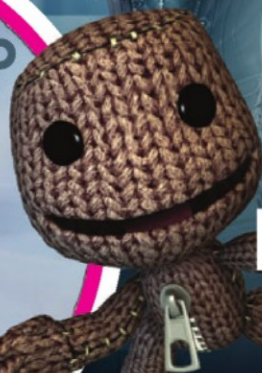
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IF YOU'VE HEARD about *Dead Space 2* then you no doubt want to play a demo of it NOW and not a month or so prior to the release of the full game. Well, you CAN exclusively in **Play**. Dead... In Space! is a demo of one of those rare points where you're more likely to die from suffocation than from having your bum ripped out of the top of your skull by a space beastie.

Why? Because the term 'dead space' refers to the sections of the respiratory tract where oxygen is not exchanged for carbon dioxide (something like that anyway), and we didn't go looking that up on Wikipedia for nothing...

RULES:

Now pay attention, it's more complicated (and much, much more exciting) than it looks. You will need two dice of two different colours, ideally. Failing that, one dice of one colour will do, you pikey, but we're going to assume that you have two and you'll have to figure out how to make it work with one dice yourself because we haven't got all day.

So, decide now which of your dice is your Moving dice and which is your Breathing dice. You're not allowed to change it halfway through.

Position some kind of marker on the Start. A little model of Isaac Clarke would be perfect, but we used a pen lid instead.

Roll both the dice. First, move your marker the number of squares indicated by the Moving dice. You can go whichever direction you like at junctions, and even go backwards if you like. Next, deduct the number shown on the Breathing dice from your Oxygen total, which always starts at 25, on the little chart. That's a turn finished, so mark a turn on the Turn column on the little chart.

**If your Oxygen falls to 0 or below you are dead...
IN SPACE!**

...which means your game is over and you suck. To avoid this happening you can visit the O2 spaces – not to make a phone call or send a text, no no – but to replenish your Oxygen. Whenever you land on one of these spaces your turn ends immediately and you can disregard the Breathing dice roll. On any turn spent stationary on an O2 space you can roll both dice and add the total to your Oxygen. But your Oxygen can never go above the maximum of 25.

The aim of the game is to get from the Start to the Exit in as few turns as possible without dying on the way. It's so simple even a complete idiot could have designed it. And did, as it happens.

If you get to the exit alive, make a note of the number of turns you took and get a friend to try to do it in fewer. You might need to lock them in the room.



O ²	Turns
25	

O^2	Turns
25	



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